Interview with Roger Kirk

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROGER KIRK

Interviewed by: Horace G. Torbert

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Q: This is a Foreign Service oral history interview with Ambassador Roger Kirk made under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies at DACOR Bacon House in Washington, D.C., beginning on May 21st, 1991. The interviewer is Horace G. Torbert. Welcome to DACOR House, Ambassador Kirk, we're off for the first time I know. We're glad to have you here, and I hope you're prepared to give us a little bit of your long and very interesting career.

KIRK: Thank you Tully. I'm prepared in the sense that I'm ready to talk.

Q: I wonder if you would start out and tell us a little bit about how you first got interested in the Foreign Service, or perhaps the right question would be did you ever think of any other career? But for the people not familiar with your background would you tell us anything you want to say about your preparation and education, and first interest.

KIRK: My family have long been in government service for several generations, mostly in the Navy. I had determined very early on in my life that I wanted to work for the government rather than go into business. The question was then largely what? My father was a career Naval officer, spent some 40 years in the Navy, and that was enough basically to convince me that I didn't want to go into the military. Not that I disliked it; but I

just decided that it wasn't quite the life for me. The decision on the Foreign Service came somewhat later. My first brush with international affairs was when my father was sent as Naval Attach# to London in May of 1939, a rather significant date for an American to be going as a Naval Attach#. My mother and I, and my two sisters, went over with him. I remember his being very careful to have my mother pick out a house not in London, but sufficiently away from London so the bombing that he felt was sure to come would not affect that place. And we did. My parents being reluctant to part with me at age eight, I had a governess for the first few months and then went to a British boarding school. When war broke out in September we moved to a larger house in the same village and were joined by two families from the American embassy, the Achilles—he was then, I think, a third or second secretary, something like that in London; and Vinton Chapin. Rudy Schoenfeld was also in the house for a while. The object was for these people to get out of London where it was feared at that time there would be bombing even though there was none at that point.

After several months in British boarding school my family pulled me out. The school, in the best British tradition, packed all my things without my knowing what was going on. I was called to the head master's office and whisked out of school by my mother. We flew to northern Ireland, she and I, in a DC-3, my first flight, and hers too, I might add. The plane windows were all blacked out. We went to the house of an old aunt where we thought we would spend the war. But a few weeks later we took a ship evacuating Americans from the British Isles to the United States. I don't remember much about that except the excitement of passing through a convoy in the middle of the night on the wide ocean. Our own ship, the United States being a neutral country at that point, was lit up with all lights glowing. To all of a sudden in the ocean come across 50 or 60 ships, none of which had any lights at all and thread your way through them was quite adventuresome, at least for a nine-year-old boy.

Q: There was no radar then, I guess, at least on passenger ships.

KIRK: As far as I know there was no radar. It was all done by visual means. My father stayed in England for much of the war in a variety of capacities, ending up as Eisenhower's Naval Chief of Staff in Paris, and commanding the American navel forces in the Normandy landing. My mother was quite cross that she was not able to join my father in late '44 in France because my aunt, Mary Chapin, was able to join her husband who was a Foreign Service officer in France, or North Africa. I've forgotten where they were stationed. I think it was North Africa originally and then he went on into France.

In any case, after the war was over, my father came back to Washington in the Navy. His very good friend of, by that time probably almost 30 years standing, Dean Acheson, was Secretary of State. He asked my father to be ambassador to Belgium in early 1946. The reason that was given to me at that point to explain this outside appointment was that the Foreign Service had very few people available for that kind of job at that time. Many of the people in the Foreign Service having gone into military service, the Foreign Service was somewhat disrupted. And of course, with my father's experience in Europe with Eisenhower and the aura of military victory that hung about all the people involved in that, I suppose they thought this would be a good appointment. In any case, he went there and I spent three summers in Belgium, the summers of '46, '47 and '48, out of school and college in the United States.

Q: You were just about getting into college at that time.

KIRK: Yes, that's right. I entered college in the fall of '47. We did a good deal of traveling in Europe at that time. It was not particularly easy, especially going by car, because the bridges were down, at least in '46. I remember we visited the Normandy beaches. We had to detour for a hundred miles or so to get across some of the smaller French rivers. And we had, of course, to take with us toilet paper, butter, jam, Jerry can after Jerry can of gasoline. I was struck, I must say, by the difference in different countries. England, to my recollection, was the least well off of the countries that we were in, except Germany perhaps. It was certainly much less well off than Belgium. Belgium was relatively well-off.

The Belgian Congo had sold uranium and copper to the United States for dollars all during the war. That helped the Belgium economy immensely. Also the front moved through Belgium fairly quickly, and Belgium was the rear area of the front for some period of time. Thus the American soldiers and people spent quite a lot of money there. So the Belgians were doing reasonably well. I remember in Britain the food was terrible. In France it was a bit better. I was struck in our travels to Germany—when we went to Germany my father would, of course, furl the American flag because he was not ambassador to Germany, but he would unveil the plaque that bore his four admiral stars which in the occupied zone of Germany seemed about as good, at least to the MPs.

I remember being struck by two things: one, how hard the Germans were working. You could see them picking up the rubble, you could see them out in the fields. They seemed to be working much harder than the French, for example. And also the hostility that one saw, in some of them at least, as they looked at this big black American car going down the road—memories of the war were still very, very fresh. I was able to attend the Nuremberg trial in '46 just for one day. We flew down in the morning, spent the day, and came back in the evening. The city was still full of rubble at that time, and there was the stench of the unburied corpses all around. We went to the trial. I was struck by the fact that a real effort was being made to condemn these men for personal acts against individuals, at least at that stage, rather than for planning of war. Of course, it was fascinating to look at people like Goering, Hess, and the rest. Perhaps the most interesting thing was that I was able to go for lunch with the judges in their chambers. There were eight judges, as I recall, two from each, United States, Britain, France and the Soviets. I was asked did I want to ask a question of the Soviet judge. I think I asked some silly thing. I did not ask, “How does it happen that a Soviet who is representing a government that has shot many of its own people, and its prisoners of war, is sitting here in solemn judgment of the Germans?” That certainly was the feeling that I and many other people had.

Q: At your age, that was quite remarkable that you would have that.

KIRK: I'd been exposed to those views. I know that my father was very troubled by aspects of the Nuremberg trials, since he felt, not surprisingly as a military man, that the senior military people should not be tried and judged for performing what they considered their duty to their country. Not shooting prisoners, of course, but carrying out of operations which were perfectly legitimate military operations even though they happened to be on the losing side.

Q: I remember there was a part of the American legal profession that felt that way, too. Another part felt it was the only thing to do.

KIRK: Passions were running very, very high.

Q: That's an absolutely fascinating experience to have had. Your father stayed in...

KIRK: He stayed in Brussels for three years. I went up to Berlin in '47 or '48. We, of course, heard many complaints in Brussels about the conduct of German occupiers and others, but I was struck by the fact that our American military, and I suppose civilians, were living in elegant houses owned by Germans which had been confiscated as these people were Nazis or something of the kind. I remember asking one family, “What happened to the furniture?” “Oh, we don't know. It probably went into the fireplace.” This, I'm sure, was lovely antique furniture that was destroyed.

I remember there was an organized warehouse where you went as an American with your coffee, or your sugar, and you got points. The Germans came in the other end of the warehouse and brought the family silver, the family porcelain, the rest, and they got points in return. For a few pounds of coffee you could get some wonderful treasures. Of course, that left a rather bad taste in my mouth.

In any case, in 1949 my father was asked to go as ambassador to Moscow. He had had no Russian experience and we often wondered why he was chosen. I recall that George Kennan had visited three or four embassies a few months before, apparently on a mission

to look them over and see who might be best fitted for Moscow. I think it was not an accident they chose a Navy man, that is, a person who is used to keeping up the morale of his staff in very isolated circumstances. Embassy Moscow certainly was isolated at that time, and the techniques used to keep a crew happy at sea are probably somewhat similar to those of being in Moscow.

My father came back to the U.S. rather unexpectedly in the spring of '49. I had my Easter vacation from Princeton, and I came down and I asked my father why he was back. He said, “It's Moscow.” And I said, “You need an interpreter,” namely myself. This, of course, was a joke because I had taken about four months of college Russian, but he went along with the gag. He was accustomed to take a young man as an aide, an unpaid aide, and he was gracious enough to decide I would fill the bill. This was between my sophomore and junior years at Princeton. So I went with him to Moscow in June of 1949 and stayed there until August of 1950 working at the embassy. It was that experience...

Q: For over a year.

KIRK: For over a year, yes, thirteen months or so. I just took a year out of college which at that time was considered a rather odd thing to do. I remember my father talking to Harold Dodds, the president of Princeton, to assure that this rather irregular procedure was in fact acceptable to the college, and they assured him that it was. Very few people were going to Moscow at that time, of course.

Q: The experience was absolutely valuable but gave you a personal problem as to which class you belonged to.

KIRK: That's right. I don't know which class to have reunions with.

Q: If you like reunions, you go to both of them.

KIRK: My solution has been to go to neither. Anyway, that was a long answer to your question because essentially that Moscow experience persuaded me that I did want to go into Foreign Service.

Q: Also, it gave you tremendous experience. I suppose you got your Russian down pretty darn well by the time you got through the first year in Moscow.

KIRK: Yes. My job there was bossing around the Russian workers who worked for the embassy, carrying boxes of things. Until I told them what to do in Russian they didn't do anything, which was a good way to learn. I didn't learn very educated Russian in many cases, but they made mistakes in their language as often as I did.

We stopped at the Foreign Ministers Conference in Paris on the way in June of 1949. Vishinsky and Acheson, Bevin, and I'm not sure who the Frenchman was, but I remember attending several meals with our delegation and hearing Mr. Acheson and Mr. Dulles and the others talking about it. It was a period when we had the feeling that we had to be very tough with the Russians, that we had to make the best kind of agreements we could. There was still a good deal of uncertainty, as I recall—and I made some notes at the time—in the minds of the leaders of the American delegation as to what the fate of Europe would be, and whether if the economy of Europe went bad, the Communists in fact would take over internally in Europe. There was a lot of concern even though it was after '47. I know that Mr. Acheson was very pleased with some of the progress that he made after he threatened to leave the conference. He said he got something like four concessions in seven minutes after he threatened to leave the conference.

We arrived in Moscow in late June of 1949, and the Soviets allowed my father to present his credentials on the 4th of July as a mark of courtesy to the United States. One of my first experiences there was when I was out with my mother in a chauffeur driven car in the center of Moscow. The embassy was right across from the Kremlin at that time, where the Intourist is now, on Mokhovaya Square. We could look out at the Kremlin, we could

see the parades from the chancery. We drove out from there and were a little puzzled to find, as we looked around, that the streets were being emptied of everyone, except us. Lines of police were moving out from us clearing the streets entirely. It was a somewhat eerie feeling, especially on your second or third day in Moscow. We found out later that the Bulgarian leader, Dimitrov, had died and Stalin was going to march behind his casket through the street. For that to happen, they had, several hours before, to clear everybody off the streets, shut all the windows, close all the curtains to be sure that no one would get within sight or sound of the great leader.

Anyway, as I said, my job essentially was bossing these Russian workmen. We had very little real communication with them about their own private lives. They were simple folk and they were under very strict rules as to what they could say, or not say. They were a rough and ready group and willing to work. They preferred to talk, but they were willing to work. And then during the winter when that work died down, I was translating the Soviet press. Our officers in the political section in those days did not all speak Russian. In fact, very few of them spoke Russian. I would digest articles orally for them from Pravda and Izvestia in the morning so they would know what, if anything, was in the newspapers, which was not very much.

Q: That surprises me. I would have thought by that time the political section would be fairly fluent.

KIRK: Well, we had Dick Davis and John Keppel, both of whom were reasonably good Russian speakers. George Morgan then was not. Dick Service, who was the Far Eastern fellow, was not. Ray Thurston, who was doing Middle East, was not. Wally Barbour, the DCM, didn't know Russian. Of course, my father didn't.

Q: They eventually became somewhat fluent later on. After that year you went back and then came out summers for a year or so, did you?

KIRK: That's right. I went back in August of 1950 to my junior year at Princeton, and then the summer of my junior to senior year, that is '50 to '51, I spent again in Moscow.

Q: And then being the son of a military family, you spent a little time in the military service.

KIRK: Yes, I was in the reserve at that time in a prisoner of war interrogation unit, the theory being that as I spoke some Russian, that was an appropriate assignment. But then I volunteered for the Air Force effective upon my graduation from college in June of 1952. It was a question of perhaps being drafted for two years in the Army, or spending almost three years in the Air Force. In the Air Force they told me they would send me to basic training and then to Officer's Candidate School, and then would bring me back to Washington to work on the intelligence side on the Soviet Union. There were very few people who had been in the Soviet Union at that point and they found it useful to have me here. So after whatever it was—nine months—in Lackland Air Force Base, I came to Washington and spent two years working on essentially internal Soviet reporting for the Air Force, political reporting essentially.

Q: So you were pretty well trained by the time you got around to taking the Foreign Service exam.

KIRK: Yes, I took the Foreign Service exam between basic training and OCS. I went from Lackland to Dallas where I had an introduction to some friends of my sister's. I remember the best preparation for my Foreign Service exam, which was then three days long, was having my first martinis in about three months, and living a somewhat more civilized life. My mood was so relaxed I did quite well in the written exam. I didn't have any special graduate training for it but at Princeton I had been at the School for Public International Affairs which meant that I could take history, economics, politics, government, languages, all toward a major. That seemed to be enough in those days to pass the written.

Q: Did you take the orals then or wait until later on?

KIRK: I passed the written in the summer of 1952 and in those days you had to wait at least a year before you could take the orals because of the backlog. I took the orals in early '54 so it was a little over a year. I went into the Service in early '55—April of '55. I must say that my friends in Washington at that point were not at all convinced I was going into the Foreign Service. The theory was that anyone who seemed to be reasonably intelligent and attractive would be going to the CIA, not in the Foreign Service. That was McCarthy time.

Q: Thank God there were a few of you that came in this business. What did you take? Sort of a small orientation and then...

KIRK: Yes, I came in the Service and, either before I actually came in, or the first morning I was interviewed by the head of the Executive Secretariat, Jim Byrnes I believe, a civil servant, who said they wanted me to join the Secretariat after my training. My training consisted of two mornings at a town house near the Department where everyone who came into the State Department that particular week, I guess, was lectured about security and such things. There was no Foreign Service officer course at that time. I think it was a period in between. So with the benefit of those two mornings and perhaps one afternoon I went to work in the Executive Secretariat, initially on the publications side, and then somewhat later on what they called the line.

Q: That was certainly a good way to learn a lot about the Department fast I would think.

KIRK: Yes. Certainly then, and I think still, service in the Secretariat or in a staff position job early on is key to knowing how the Department works. To get to know people and be known by people, including more senior people, is the best possible way to learn about the Department and to lay the foundation for a good career.

Q: That lasted what? A year or so?

KIRK: That was two years. I had the Middle Eastern desk. In those days we had four people on the line. I handled NEA, economics and a few other things. It was the time of Suez, of course. It was a rather active region of the world.

Q: You spent some nights there probably.

KIRK: I spent some nights there and went on some conferences with Mr. Dulles and the others. Douglas MacArthur was the Counselor of the Department at that time. He was very successful in coordinating a conference. In those days the Department wasn't very good at it. He knew how to get the Secretary's attention to focus on the critical issues. Dulles was not a person to have much patience with focusing on things that were not of very high priority. I've seen him get up and simply leave a meeting when he didn't think it was interesting. I remember being in Mr. Dulles's office at the time he made the decision to stop the funding for the Aswan Dam. It was a small meeting going on and he was receiving different recommendations. One of the most important factors was that Congress was very fed up with the Egyptians, as they were spending a lot of money on buying arms from the Soviets. A leading Senator had written a letter saying they were proposing, and it looked as though it would pass, to put in a provision in an aid bill saying that no money appropriated by Congress could be used for assistance to Egypt, or for the Aswan Dam. To some extent therefore, at least as it appeared to me, Dulles's hand was forced. After hearing the various recommendations he did end discussions saying, “Well, I think we should decline to fund the Aswan Dam.” Then he looked up and for the first time, or the only time I saw him look a little thoughtful, and say, “That's a pretty important decision.” He left the room for a few minutes, I assume to talk to the President. That decision, of course, then led to a good deal of excitement during the summer.

I was getting a briefing book ready for Secretary Murphy in about a hour and a half—two hours—when he went over to London in the early summer—during the summer, I forget early or late—I guess it must have been the early summer. We had received word, or had some indication that the British and French might be planning to take some military action

and he was sent over to try and talk them out of that, which he did at that time. I was part of the Secretariat and delegation going to the London-Suez Canal Users Conference in August.

Q: This was a Dulles creation, wasn't it?

KIRK: This was a Dulles creation. It was designed essentially to get the Suez Canal users together; to tell the Egyptians that they couldn't, they didn't know how to run the Canal. The Egyptians had nationalized the Canal by this time. The idea was they didn't know how to run the Canal and the users would boycott or come out in some way to prevent the Canal from being useful to the Egyptians. The Indians were the big opponents at the conference. We spent a lot of time getting papers ready for Mr. Dulles to use. I spent most of my time back at delegation headquarters, I was the junior of two or perhaps three officers in the Secretariat there. I was working the hectograph machines...

Q: You earned your pay.

KIRK: We earned our pay the way we reproduced things in those days, a very messy business. When I got word that my presence was wanted at the conference, I put on my coat and went over there. I was ushered into a room—a fairly small room where a great many distinguished people were sitting including the Secretary, Assistant Secretary Rountree and others—and stood at the door and Mr. Dulles motioned to me to come over. I had no idea he knew who I was even. He sat me down next to him and said, “Gentlemen, this is your new Secretary General.” I looked just as surprised as I was. They had decided apparently to send a mission to Egypt under Australian Prime Minister Menzies, a five power mission, to in effect give Mr. Nasser the conclusions of the conference, and to talk him out of keeping the Canal. Mr. Dulles wanted the U.S. to play a fairly minor role, and the British and French and others wanted us to play a fairly major role. We were one of the five powers represented. Loy Henderson was our representative. But they wanted an American Secretary General. I don't know, but I guess we resisted it and finally Mr. Dulles

acceded but by appointing a Foreign Service officer, aged 25, with about a year and a half experience in the Foreign Service. It became very clear that this Secretary General was going to be the servant of the commission, not the leader of the commission. So I went to Cairo, pulled together some staff, and got some funds. We were down there about a week. During that time it became perfectly apparent that Mr. Nasser could run the Canal, and he wasn't about to give it up. The commission then left Cairo not having accomplished its mission but at least having been fed, and housed, and transported by yours truly.

After the Secretariat I went to Rome.

Q: You eventually left.

KIRK: I was told that I was going to go to NATO so my wife started studying French at FSI. We had two small children; one was two and one was one. She was pregnant with the third but she thought French would be good and the FSI was offering it for spouses on a space available basis. Then about two-thirds of the way through the course I called her up and said, “No, we're being sent to Italy.” And she said, “What do I do now?” I said, “Keep on learning French.”

Q: At least if you went to France speaking Italian they'd snub you, but if you went to Italy speaking French you got some cache' out of it.

KIRK: I inquired about language study and was told there was no time or funds, so I took 18 hours of Berlitz at my own expense. We arrived in Rome—Betty having been out of the country once on our honeymoon, and once on a grand tour with her family—myself, having been out a good deal—arrived in Rome with our two small children in the middle of the summer at the Pensione Villa Borghese where they spoke no English whatsoever. It was hot, it was close down by the road.

Q: At least you were across the street from the park.

KIRK: I remember thinking this was awful, but our Italian got a lot better fast. There I was the junior member of the political section working exclusively on external affairs, foreign relations. The Italians, of course, as you well know Tully, were sharing with us some reports from their embassies in Sofia and Tehran—their diplomatic representation. I would go down and pick up those despatches, translate them, or excerpt them, and send them back to Washington.

Q: As a result I think they got to use our embassy in Tehran.

KIRK: They did, but I think it was you, Tully, who told me that you had prevented that from being...

Q: ...from being sold, but that was much later on.

KIRK: Rome, as third secretary, was very nice in that there were plenty of counselors of embassy, not to speak of DCMs and ambassadors, but plenty of counselors of embassy, including you, to take care of all the social responsibilities, so that we were relatively free to do what we wanted, to take care of our small family, to see something of the countryside, and of course to mingle with the Italians as best we could but it was very...

Q: ... several score of families came to visit you every summer.

KIRK: There was that, and we formed friendships there amongst the junior officers who stayed our friends.

Q: It was a wonderful place to be. Let's see, Niles Bond was the Counselor.

KIRK: Niles Bond was the Political Counselor, Earl Sohm was my immediate boss, John Keppel was the Communist and Socialist watcher.

Q: Clayton Madd and Gus Vettetri were in the political section...

KIRK: Jernegan was the DCM and then Outerbridge Horsey came in. Zellerbach was the Ambassador. When my wife had a baby I remember Mrs. Zellerbach sent her a little sweater, which was very sweet. It was a huge embassy. It was a very nice touch, one which I think is something to be borne in mind by senior officers or ambassadors in large places—a little gesture is often very much appreciated.

I didn't know her much, but you may recall, Tully, it was Matilda Sinclair, a political officer or whatever you called her — social secretary—at the embassy, who certainly told myself and my wife what to do at receptions, where to go, and where to stand. There's no nonsense about it.

Q: You came back to the Department for a while after that.

KIRK: I said I would like to go into Soviet affairs, perhaps for obvious reasons, and I remember getting a message from the Department—I suppose it was an airgram in those days—saying that Soviet training was filled up, but they'd like to teach me Bulgarian. I noted that we had no embassy in Bulgaria, and hadn't had for some years. Was this really something they thought was a good idea? And the answer was, when I got back to Washington, that they had a Bulgarian language tutor. They needed at least two students per year in order to keep this tutor on and therefore they wanted to have two students.

Q: And the other one was a military guy.

KIRK: Probably. We went off on home leave to rest up for this rigorous Bulgarian language training, which my Russian had presumably helped in, though I had the thought it might have helped with Russian even more. I got a call from Mac Godley, who was then working as a special assistant for Freddie Reinhardt, who was the Counselor for the Department. Mac said he was leaving and he wanted me to take his place. I told him that I had this problem of Bulgarian language training; and he said, “Don't worry about that.” Mac was

much senior to me, he was probably a 2 and I was a 5 in ranks in those days. But he and Freddie seemed to think my Secretariat experience and all was enough for the job.

Q: Freddie was very young for his job; he had the rank, I guess, but in terms of years...

KIRK: So I went down to the Counselor's office after about two weeks of home leave and unfortunately Freddie got sick and I went back for four more weeks of home leave. The principal responsibility we had there was coordinating the President's trips abroad. This was quite a new thing. During the summer, before I came on, Eisenhower had traveled to western Europe. Other than Roosevelt's wartime trips that was the only trip abroad a President had made except for Wilson. We, as I say, became the coordinator for Eisenhower's trip out to Italy, Turkey, Greece, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Morocco and Spain over the course of 10 or 12 days. And then another trip a few months later down to Latin America. I was assigned as the principal State Department officer of the advance party. Jim Hagerty, the President's press secretary, and his appointments secretary, Stephens, and Colonel Walters, his pilot...

Q: ...and all the secret service people.

KIRK: A plane full. It was also my first jet plane ride. I was sitting on a couch in the front part of the cabin when we took off and the plane went up so fast, and the wheels came up with such a bang, I thought the tail had hit. I looked around very nervous but everyone else was very relaxed. But in any case, my job essentially was to explain this phenomenon of a White House visit, and the White House advance party, to the embassies, and embassies to the White House party. And neither one of us knew each other very well in those days, or perhaps since.

Q: Were you in Rome when Eisenhower came through?

KIRK: I was not there when he came through. I was just there for the advance party.

Q: The advance party gave us some trouble then, I remember. This, of course, was Lyndon Johnson, was it?

KIRK: No, this was Eisenhower.

Q: When you're talking about the job you had. Oh yes, it started in '60, it's still Eisenhower.

KIRK: I remember Secretary Dulles came through Rome when I was assigned in Rome.

Q: They did a couple of times.

KIRK: Right. He was en route to Taiwan. That was for the Pope's funeral. Mrs. Luce, John McCone, and a bunch of others.

Q: And the bed broke down in the middle of the night, and Dulles was miserable when he got off, but Claire got off looking like the first night at the opera. My wife has never gotten over that.

KIRK: Phyllis Bernau was late for the Secretary's aircraft. Do you remember that?

Q: Yes, because I had her.

KIRK: I wasn't going to say it.

Q: I remember you were waiting and waiting.

KIRK: Only one person the Secretary would wait for and that's Phyllis.

Q: Well, he took off earlier than he was going to, I'm sure.

KIRK: Even those advance trips were a very fascinating exercise. General Walters, then Colonel Walters, was the interpreter. He went along with us.

Q: He was a very engaging fellow, he could also tell you what he interpreted afterwards, verbatim, very, very helpful.

KIRK: Then after a few months—I guess it was only a few months, less than a year in any case, working in the Counselor's office, I was asked to work as a staff assistant in Secretary Herter's office. He was then the Secretary of State, so I moved over there replacing Bill Scranton as a matter of fact. Scranton was a political appointee and did very different things than I did. I was still on the junior staff, Max Krebs was my immediate boss. I spent a little over a year working for Mr. Herter in that office until the change in administration.

Q: Herter was pretty sick himself, not sick exactly, but he was crippled—could move easier some days than others—but still, of course, was very sharp mentally.

KIRK: We moved from what was then called New State, from the old part of the building to the new part of the building, the Secretary's office. I remember him saying as he pushed open the door of his new office, “It takes a strong man to open that door.” And one of the secretaries who had been there a long time said, “It takes a strong man to be Secretary of State,” which he was in character...

Q: I wasn't one of his close associates, but I... Were there any substantive things of that period that you remember particularly? You still lopped over into the Kennedy administration, didn't you?

KIRK: Well, until the evening of January 19th. One of the interesting things while I was in the Department in that job was how the flow of business to the Secretary's office tailed off as the month of December ended and January came along. It was also interesting to see some who had been very friendly with, and respectful to Secretary Herter, become less and less so at the time of administration change. The better people, of course, did not. But you could sort of sense power moving. The Secretary asked me if I wanted to be

recommended to Secretary Rusk as one of his people. I said I thought I had spent enough time in the staff aide business by that time, and it was time I did something on my own, with which he agreed. I then went down to work for Soviet Affairs.

During Herter's time we did basically the regular business. One exciting morning, I think it was a Saturday, when the U-2 went down...I know that Hugh Cumming, as head of INR, and Bohlen as the Soviet man, and a bunch of others were in and out of the office all day. I guess the President was away and there was a lot of debate as to what action to take about the U-2. There was a cover story that it was all by accident that was put out routinely. Then the question was, do we admit that it was something that we did on purpose, or do we in effect say it was something the CIA had done on its own. The predominant opinion at that point and the recommendation, when the party got back, was to say that it had been authorized. The feeling being to have the President deny responsibility, or say it was someone else's fault, would lead to a Soviet feeling that he was quite irresponsible, he did not have control over the covert warriors in the administration. And that this would be more disturbing for world peace than for the President, in fact, to say yes, I did order it. But there was a lot of toing and froing in and around the office that day. And as I say, the decision at that point was to go with the cover story at least until they could be in touch with the President and decide how to play it—which was two or three days later. The cover story being that it was a weather plane that had lost its way.

Q: I remember. I was in Europe. That was a little earlier, wasn't it? It was '60 I would have thought, early '60.

KIRK: Yes, because the administration ended in January '61, so we're talking sometime in 1960.

Q: As a matter of fact I was in the office of the CIA station chief in Athens at the time. We were just perhaps winding up with your travel duties and with your Secretariat duties. Is there any more on that or do you want to go on?

KIRK: I think we might go on.

Q: You finally got to Moscow after that, did you?

KIRK: Yes, after the meeting in Secretary Herter's office I went down to SOV on the public affairs side. That is preparing press guidance. I did that for a little over a year, worked for David Klein who was the head man for the press. Then he went over to the NSC staff with Mac Bundy. I then took over that job. It was Jack McSweeney who was office director. Dick Davis was the Deputy Assistant Secretary. Of course, we started at the beginning of the Kennedy administration. The basic marching orders were that there was going to be a new look at American-Soviet relations, and it was going to be a good deal more positive than it had been under the Republicans. Some of us, myself included, were a little skeptical about this. The words were somewhat more positive, but the degree of positiveness became strained by such things as Cuban Bay of Pigs, and then the Cuban missile crisis.

I had not been involved in the Bay of Pigs business when I was working for Secretary Herter, but I knew there was a project going on. People were dealing directly with him, not going through the staff aides.

Then I went off to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, the Russian area and language training facility run by the Department of the Army for their people. Its part of their so-called fast program which involves a year's study at Monterey, a year's study at an academic institution, two years at Garmisch, a year of further training, and then you're ready. That was the fast program. The Department of State had a somewhat different version—you had nine months at Garmisch and then went to Moscow. It was excellent training because you were

supposed to have a working knowledge of Russian before you went to the school. The military had a years' training beforehand. All of your class discussions, your term papers, your reading was all in Russian. You lived it in the language for eight or nine months. When I first went, even though I'd spoken Russian pretty well, I had not used it for eleven years hardly at all.

Q: And that's a language you forget.

KIRK: And I had forgotten a good deal. I could still read pretty well, and understand reasonably well, but speaking was very difficult, coming up with anything. We had a grammar exam at the beginning and I put together the declension and conjugation tables by remembering various songs in Russian. Every time I would come to a word I knew what the word was. If I could ferret which case it was in, I'd fill in the ending for that word, and that gender in that case, like a crossword puzzle. It was very good training in terms of the instructors who were there, who were all people who had operated in Soviet society. It was in Europe originally because these people came out of the DP camps. Most of them had backgrounds that made them totally ineligible for entry into the United States— members of the communist party, members of the police, members of the Army. But that was fortunate, of course, and what made them valuable. That experience was very fine. That included two bus trips into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; one the northern route and into Moscow, one the southern route into Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Yugoslavia. That was in the fall of '62 and the spring of '63. It gave me my first taste of what we then called satellite countries, the basic message from that trip having been that the countries in Eastern Europe were quite different even then, in their character or their outlook, from each other. Some things that have become very apparent today.

After the year at Garmisch, or Oberammergau—we lived in Garmisch and went to school in Oberammergau—we drove to Moscow, myself, my wife, our four children and a nursemaid in a mid-sized American station wagon. We drove up to Stockholm, over to Helsinki, and then down into Moscow, the objective being to reduce to the extent possible

the amount of time we were driving behind the curtain in case of any accidents. We arrived safely and well.

I was assigned to the consular section for my first year in Moscow, and the political section the second year. Two weeks after we arrived there was the signing of the limited test ban treaty in Moscow for which the Secretary of State and a variety of other dignitaries arrived for the formal ceremonies. Betty and I, even though very junior, were assigned to Senator and Mrs. Fulbright, he then being the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to take them around Moscow and show them what was there. I, of course, as I say, had been there a total of two weeks though I had been there in 1949 and 1950. I quickly learned that the thing to do when asked, “What's that building?” was to give an answer even though I hadn't the foggiest notion, because to say, “I'm sorry Senator, I've been here two weeks, I don't know,” was highly unsatisfactory. Whereas if one said, “Post and telegraph,” or “Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry,” he would forget immediately, as we all would, and they came away at least satisfied that the embassy knew. So we did that, and we went with the Fulbrights up to Leningrad, and enjoyed their company very much I must say. They're both very fine people. He already at that point was struggling with the question of the relative balance between giving large amounts of assistance abroad and the needs of his home state of Arkansas and places like that in the United States. It was interesting to see this great internationalist's mind at work trying to balance these different priorities. For my mind, who always the thought internationally primarily, it was an interesting insight into the other side of the use of our resources. Not to use them just for foreign aid, because we had a real obligation to our own people. There are some very poor places in our own country.

The Consular Section in Moscow was a reasonably routine place. There was a consul and two vice consuls. My tour there was enlivened by the fact that it was during that time that we negotiated the consular convention with the Soviet Union. I was chosen by the Political Counselor, Mac Toon, to be his assistant in that respect. So the better part of that year we went once or twice a week to the Foreign Ministry to negotiate that convention.

I was essentially preparing the papers and listening while Toon and his opposite number on the other side spoke. His opposite number was the deputy legal advisor of the Foreign Ministry, Oleg Khlestov, who interestingly enough was my opposite number in Vienna as ambassador to the UN organizations there some 20 years later.

Q: Which is one of the practical fascinations of a career in the Foreign Service that you have known these people.

KIRK: Absolutely. Those contacts you think you won't see them again but you do time and again, your own people, your own nationals, but especially foreigners. We often swapped tales about that time. We were at the interesting position—we, the Embassy; and we, the Department of State—of wanting maximum protection for our consular officers and personnel in the Soviet Union, recognizing full well we then would have to give maximum immunity to Soviet consular and personnel in the United States, something the FBI and others were not at all enthusiastic about. So we had a dual negotiation going, one with Washington, and one with the Soviets. We and the Soviets, to some extent, being on the same side in the question. They, of course, wanted maximum protection for their people. The negotiation went quite well. We were nearly done and our ambassador, Ambassador Kohler, was about ready to go back to the United States on a visit. The Political Counselor and I thought that it would be nice if he could go back with this agreement concluded, or at least initialed. So we told the Soviets we'd like to finish within two or three weeks. And immediately they began to stonewall. They obviously felt we were under some pressure to conclude the agreement. They went back on some of the suggestions that they had made, and it took us a full six months of simply— well, not quite that much—let's say three months of simply showing no interest in these meetings whatsoever, making no phone calls, before we could get back to where we had been.

Q: But this is great training.

KIRK: Absolutely. And to tell the Soviets that all we wanted to do was give our ambassador something nice when he went home, of course was totally rejected by them as unworthy of consideration as a reason. But I've often thought of that. If you seem to be under pressure, they, or maybe some others with whom you negotiate, will immediately up the ante.

Two other things in the consular section. There were a number of American Armenians, some of whom came from the Soviet Union, from Armenia, in the 1930's, or '20's, or even before. Some of whom were born in the United States to the people who had come out during the '20's or even a little earlier. They had gone back to the Soviet Union. In 1945 one shipload went back, and in 1947 another went back. They went back in response to the Soviet propaganda they were building a new Armenia and the sort of euphoria of the post-war alliance. And once back there these people were never allowed to leave even though many of them were American born citizens. And during the time that we were there—that I was there in the consular section—the first one of these was allowed by the Soviets to make contact with the embassy. I remember one of the most rewarding moments of my life was reissuing American passports to an Armenian family who had gotten Soviet permission to leave, and could leave as Americans and come back to the United States. It was not easy because the Department queried as to why they had not been in contact with the American embassy all these years if they were so anxious to come back to the United States. We reported that one had tried and spent ten years in prison as a result. We thought that was a little too high a standard; it was quite a disincentive. So the Department eventually relented and, of course, since then thousands of these people have come out. Even under Stalin's time they preserved their American customs, they played baseball, they preserved their knowledge of English. They did some really quite heroic things in that sense, and that was nice.

The only other thing, I suppose, of any eventfulness was we had one of these prisoner swaps where we were exchanging a Soviet spy for someone the Soviets had alleged

was a spy, or someone they had held for many years. And there was a man called Father Ciszole. Father Ciszole had been taken prisoner by the Soviets in the early '40s I suppose. There was one person in Soviet Affairs...Virginia James, who remembered Father Ciszole. No one else seemed to know him, as they had come to SOV long after he'd been taken. And when the time came to look for two people to swap with the Soviets—one was obvious, I've forgotten who he was—and she said, “How about Father Ciszole?” So sure enough we put his name on the proposal for the exchange. The Soviets were quite puzzled but eventually did find him out in Siberia somewhere. He has since described how he was on his 20th year, or 15th year in Siberia when he got word to come to the camp office, was given a new set of clothes, a shave and a haircut, and was told he was going to the United States—to his total astonishment.

Q: Just because one lady...

KIRK: Just because one lady remembered his name. Otherwise he never would have gotten out. We realized at that point how dependent we were on the local staff. We had to prepare the American visas, and in a couple of cases American passports, for these people without the local staff knowing. This whole thing was very hush- hush, and it was very difficult to find the seals, find the ribbons, knowing where to sign, just the mechanics of getting things together. We were, as I guess most of us are, totally dependent for that kind of clerical help in the consular section. I often thought of that when I heard the Soviets had denied the locals access to the embassy from one day to the next. The consular section in Moscow must have been in a hell of a mess, along with everybody else.

Q: We were in the same boat in Budapest and in Sofia—much more so in Budapest actually.

KIRK: And, of course, some of those locals had been there for many, many years. There were a couple who had been there when I was there in 1949 and were still there. They knew very well what was going on.

Q: This is one of the thorns in our side. Theoretically, you could say, well, we'll do nothing but have our own people there who will have the language, but you lose an awful lot by doing that.

KIRK: Oh, I think so, and there is no way that you can keep a consular section where you have visitors come, where you have people actually come to get there visas, no way you can keep it free of bugs because anyone can come in to get a visa and plant a bug under a chair. I'm a proponent of the theory that you have certain areas of the embassy, or certain buildings, that are free from locals getting in. I think that is a good idea, but in the consular section, the USIA library, or residences, you don't try to keep them out, and you accept the fact, or at least the hypothesis, that everything you say is being listened to.

Q: Do you have any particular comment about Foy Kohler who was your ambassador the whole time you were there, wasn't he?

KIRK: Foy Kohler was our ambassador the whole time we were there, and he was actually DCM in Moscow up until the time my father came to Moscow. Just coincidentally, there was a change of DCM as well. I, therefore, had seen the Kohlers for a couple of days in '49. But during the period I was in Moscow from 1963 to 1965 Kohler was the ambassador. I thought very highly of him. He was a very good person to work for; he was very fair. You knew that he would stand up for you, that he would demand good performance, but that if you did good performance, that would be reflected in your record, and that if for some reason there was some mistake, then he would stand up for you. I made some stupid mistake in a note to the Soviets and it could have been trouble but he took full responsibility and backed us up wholly. And in the consular convention business he was a tower of strength. Very approachable, very human and humane person.

The second year in Moscow, I was in the political section working on external affairs, Soviet-American relations basically, but also Soviet relations with Middle East and Africa —I can't remember now; Soviet-American relations primarily. I was also the travel officer,

which meant I assigned myself as many trips as possible. That, of course, was one of the most fascinating...

Q: You had a priority to keep the traveling going.

KIRK: We worked very hard to keep the travel going. You always had to have two people going, and you were occasionally looking for someone to go along with an officer. And I had traveled a good deal even in 1949 and '50. I think it's very important in that kind of country, where you're very isolated from people, to get out, because once you're outside the capital city, you have a little more chance to talk to people. The Soviets, at least in those days, would not necessarily give you a compartment by yourself even though there were two of you traveling. The compartments were for four people, and there would often be two other people in the compartment, not necessarily KGB people—sometimes they were, but not always. And in the course of several days on the train that you would often spend, you got a chance to chat with people. So it was very rewarding.

Q: Did you ever have anything spectacular in that sense of picking up any interesting information?

KIRK: Oh, nothing really spectacular. I suppose at the time that we created the most trouble with the Soviets quite unknowingly, was when shortly before my departure from Moscow in 1950, the first time I was there, I had said to my father that I really wanted to see Siberia before I left. He agreed that that was a fine idea, and he would like to as well. So my father, Dick Service, who was our Far Eastern specialist, and myself, took a trip on the Trans-Siberian just as far out in Siberia as we were allowed to go. It was on the shore of Lake Baikal, a small village called Sluydyanka. And then we turned around and came back for about a day and a half or two days on the train until we came to a city where we were allowed to change to an airplane. We spent over a week on the train going out and several days coming back. When we arrived back at the airport in Moscow, the DCM, Wally Barbour, met my father with the news that North Korea had invaded South Korea a

few hours before. And I often thought of the Soviets trying to figure out why the American ambassador to Moscow, for no apparent reason, suddenly took it into his head to spend a week on the Trans-Siberian just when they were moving supplies and things for the North Korean invasion of South Korea. But when I think of the trains we must have derailed, and the schedules we must have thrown out of commission, it was quite a trip.

On Moscow then, the second time that is, in the mid-'60s, what else does one say? Oh, yes, Khrushchev fell during that period. The embassy did not expect it to happen, and we did not have foreknowledge of it. When people ask me about that, I say, “That is certainly the case,” but I also point out, “that Khrushchev didn't know either, and that his sources of information should be somewhat better than ours”—the American embassy's.

Q: That's a good answer.

KIRK: We tried to go to museums, the day after he was thrown out because we wanted to see if the museums were being changed. Sure enough they were all closed. Finally one of our officers raised some charwoman in the museum and said, “Why is it closed? It is supposed to be open today.” And she said, “Don't you know the government's fallen, they're working on the pictures.” And sure enough, by the time the museums reopened, Khrushchev had been brushed out of the various pictures and other people substituted. That's the way things operated in the Soviet Union.

Q: All that is fascinating. Well, I think probably we better be...

KIRK: Close it up? One final point on Moscow would probably be enough. One of my jobs in Moscow was to mingle with—it was Vietnam time, we were starting to bomb Vietnam—and the Soviets were organizing demonstrations outside of the embassy. We wanted to get some sense as to what the mood of the demonstration was. So I, because my Russian was fairly good I suppose, and because I was doing Soviet-American relations, was elected to be the person to go out and mingle with the demonstrators. So I would put on my borrowed Russian hat and put on my overcoat and go out and mingle with the

crowd. I came away with two or three conclusions. First of all, what the embassy security people said, that is to say, “the best defense is to show no sign of life in the embassy whatsoever,” is absolutely correct. Because when you're outside and people were throwing stones at an embassy, if someone sticks their head out and yells at you, it simply incites the crowd. It gets a dialogue going, it gets them excited. It's much better to present a completely impassive face, if a window breaks, a window breaks, that's just too bad. The crowd was quite orderly, but reasonably enthusiastic about seeing how many windows they could break, who could throw the furthest. I carefully should add, truthfully, I did not throw a stone, tempting as it might have been just because of the enthusiasm of the moment. But no one bothered me. I'm sure the KGB knew I was there and were watching. Someone did come over one time and said, “Where did you get those shoes? They don't look like Russian shoes.” And I said, “I got them abroad,” and moved away. There was no real hostility towards me.

In the final demonstration the Chinese students at the Soviet University joined by prearrangement. They were much less docile than the Russian students. They actually tried to run through the police lines and there were some ugly moments. A water cannon truck was brought up. I remember I was quite close to this truck when it came up. It was interesting to sense the mood of the crowd change as this truck came up. They became much more hostile. The driver was a very friendly, personable, outgoing guy. He leaned out of the window and kidded with people, and joshed with them, and defused this potentially difficult situation. They never used the water but again one got a sense as to how the mood of a crowd could change. The Chinese, as I say, were somewhat obstreperous, and the Chinese then made a big fuss later about the Soviets having beaten up their students. That was the last demonstration. The outrage of the Soviet people against American barbarism stopped suddenly. But the reason, of course, was that the Soviets were having trouble controlling the demonstration. They were always very wary about demonstrations.

Anyway, so much for that Moscow interlude.

Q: Well, this has been great and we'll pick up from here in the near future, I hope.

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Q: Here continues the second interview with Ambassador Roger Kirk by Horace G. Torbert, at DACOR Bacon House on May 28th, 1991. Well, Ambassador Kirk, welcome back on this hot steamy Memorial Day and maybe a typically Saigon day too.

KIRK: Yes, also.

Q: We were just finishing up—I think you maybe had finished up on Moscow. Do you have anything else you want to say about Moscow, or should we...

KIRK: No, I think there are lots of things there but that's probably the place to stop.

Q: Do you want to say something about how you got to New Delhi, and then go on and talk about New Delhi?

KIRK: Sure. Ambassador Bowles, then the American ambassador to New Delhi, came to Moscow on a visit. I later found out that he had talked to Ambassador Kohler about his desire to have someone with Soviet expertise in New Delhi. And between the two of them they had decided that I would be the person, and so quite irrespective of anything that I might have said or done as to where I wanted to go, I was told that New Delhi was the place for me, which I was quite pleased at.

I left Moscow in July of '65, came back on home leave, and was scheduled to go out to New Delhi in September of '65. An Indo-Pak war broke out at that point and our departure was delayed about a month so we lived in the Alban Towers, had some tutors in for the kids, and went off to New Delhi in October. In New Delhi I was in what was called the external section. Ambassador Bowles said you could not separate politics from economics

and that, therefore, instead of a political section and an economic section, he had an external section and an internal section. Of course, you can't separate internal from external either, but it was an interesting experience to be a political officer. I think it's something to think about in the sense that it gives the political officer, like myself, more of a feeling for the importance of economics and vice versa. My particular beat was Indo-Soviet relations, at least initially. Then I took up bilateral relations, and then Indo-Pak for a while. But my primary function was Indo- Soviet relations. They were quite important at that time. Of course, one of the great changes I noticed going from Moscow to New Delhi was that you could drive your car wherever you wanted, that the sun shone all the time, and that every Indian politician wanted to tell you all about his plans for the future. The information overload was quite a contrast to the very small bits of information we got in Moscow, requiring of course a different approach to political reporting.

The only real taste I got of the Soviet Union in India was when I went down to visit the Bhilai steel works. Anyway, I went down to visit this Soviet built steel mill in the central part of India. When I arrived and walked into this hotel, the immediate Russian smell greeted me. The food was all Russian, the signs were all in Russian. It was a little Russian colony, plus me for those two or three days when I visited the mill.

In India, basically, I guess I was impressed by the extent of the American program, the American presence there, but how small it seemed in comparison with the extent of India. What a small drop in the bucket it was in a way. India, of course, is immensely impressive by its size and all the rest—I won't go into that. The most, I suppose, dramatic thing that happened to me while I was there was when Stalin's daughter defected in New Delhi. That story has been told extensively so I need not repeat it here except to say I was sitting quietly at home having my supper when I got a call from the station chief in New Delhi to say, “Could I come down to the embassy right away please.” So I went down wondering what was up, and when I arrived he said, “We have someone here who claims she's Stalin's daughter and wants to defect.” And I said, “What? I don't believe it. It's some kind of prank.” I mean if it was someone else's daughter, but Stalin's daughter. We had no idea

that she was in New Delhi, certainly no idea that she wanted to defect, but she'd come in about 7:00 p.m. and shown the Marine her passport.

Q: Had you ever seen her before?

KIRK: I had never seen her before. I knew that there was a daughter, that's about as much as I could contribute. I did not even know that she had an Indian husband who had died. She had come back to spread his ashes on the ground. But during the course of that evening, after some deliberation, we decided that even though it might well be a put-up job, that what we should do, or recommend to the ambassador that he do, was process her expeditiously, but legally, for exit from India and entry into the United States.

Q: You didn't have to smuggle her out as you would have in Eastern Europe.

KIRK: There was consideration of that, but we didn't want it. In fact, the CIA had arranged some at least unobtrusive ways to get her out. We really thought it might be a Soviet provocation, or an Indian one, and we didn't want to be caught. As it so happened I went to the airport with her later that evening, along with the CIA man, and we told her she had to process herself out just as an ordinary person. She comes of strong stock and she did that. Planes come and go in India at 2:00 - 3:00 o'clock in the morning so it was about midnight when we went out, or 11:30. She processed through in her own name, it was Alliluyeva, which nobody recognized at that time, of course. Alliluyeva would be the correct way to transliterate. In any case, she processed herself through using her own passport, and we sat in the airport waiting lounge, and then, of course, were told the plane was an hour and a half late. So we sat around quite nervous and finally I said I thought we ought to order some tea and look a little more normal. We were expecting the Indian police and the Soviets to arrive at almost any second, bursting through claiming we had kidnapped her, and all the rest. One of the more difficult moments came when she said she'd like to go to the ladies room. “Of course.” She disappeared and I thought, “We'll never see

her again, or she'll come out in a KGB uniform, a KGB colonel, or something." But she reappeared looking somewhat relieved, and we sent her off.

The ambassador took on his own responsibility issuing her a visa to enter the United States. This enabled her to get on the plane and get out. In the event she was stopped in Rome and sent up to Switzerland. But the advantage of getting her out fast, the reason we did that, was that we were sure that the Indians would not be able to resist Soviet pressure if we tried to hold her and then get Indian permission to send her out. By far the best thing, not only from her point of view, but from the Indian point of view, was to take her out before they realized that she was missing.

Q: And do it in a normal way.

KIRK: And do it in a normal way.

Q: It was very valuable to have you there, I would think. Going back for just a minute to that steel mill unless you are going to do it later. I remember having heard quite a lot about that from some of my Indian colleagues and what great people the Soviets were, and what louses we were for not having given them a steel mill. It was obviously a very useful propaganda ploy, and very useful psychological thing, but was it an economically sound thing, or not.

KIRK: No. The mill, which by the way, was Bhilai, I now remember. Our people who knew a lot more about those things than I did said it did not make a great deal of sense, that it produced low quality steel with about the same labor cost as would have been done in the United States, for example. Each individual was paid much less, but they used many more people. On the other hand, in fairness, the Indians did not have to spend foreign exchange for that steel. So it certainly was a propaganda advantage for the Soviets and I think it may have been of marginal...in fact, it probably was of economic utility for the Indians.

The Soviets then offered, and indeed were proceeding to build a much larger mill, Bokaro, which was clearly unnecessary and a real white elephant.

Q: They built quite a few among their own satellites—in Bulgaria, for example.

KIRK: And in Romania. They weren't economical at the time and they really never have been.

Q: Well, I just thought it was a point we wanted to get in. It was discussed. Well, you got her out.

KIRK: We got her out.

Q: And was that the end of your...did you ever hear from her?

KIRK: I had a postcard from her, not addressed to me by name because she did not know my name, but a postcard addressed from her, saying 'thank you', and then some mention in her book. Then Chester Bowles in his book did mention my name which I was a little concerned at because I thought this would mean that the Soviets would think I was in the CIA, which I was not. But it didn't seem to do any real harm. It was kind of amusing in that the person in the Soviet embassy who was responsible for staying in contact with me on the KGB side, as opposed to the political side, was also her caretaker, and he had made the mistake of giving her a passport the day before she was supposed to leave which enabled her to leave legally.

Q: In another direction.

KIRK: In another direction, and his relations with me afterwards were quite strained.

Q: Well if they were thinking you were an agent, you were never going to change it no matter...

KIRK: Oh, sure. They have a file on me so long. I guess the only other thing I might mention that was somewhat out of the ordinary was our trip up to Sikkim—you went to Sikkim?

Q: No, no, I've never been in India actually, I've been in Pakistan but I was never...

KIRK: Well, Hope Cooke who married the Chogyal of Sikkim, is a cousin by marriage of mine, and she very nicely, and her husband, invited our whole family to come up to Sikkim, so we did, my wife, myself, and our four children, for about a week. We flew up to Bagdogra, and then by train up to Darjeeling, and then by royal jeep into Sikkim, all of us in one jeep with the royal crest on it. That was the only elegant thing about it practically. We had a very interesting time up there. It was the Chogyal's birthday, I believe, and there were all kinds of ceremonies with the old customs and horns, and all the rest. The interesting thing to me was that his palace—he was the ruler of Sikkim—his palace was on the second highest hill in Gangtok. The residence of what had been the British representative, and now is the Indian representative, was on the highest hill, and it was perfectly clear what the order of precedence was. There were a couple divisions of Indian troops on the Sikkim-China border, and they also had an obviously controlling hand in Sikkim if they wished to. But Hope and her husband were trying to increase the evidence of Sikkim's independence, the outward signs of it. She and a niece of mine had designed the national flag, and I think helped write the national anthem, and a couple of other things. But it was clearly a remote, old fashioned place with the real problem being that the Nepalese were starting to outnumber the Sikkimese, and the Nepalese were not so keen on the Sikkim royal family continuing to rule that place. And that allowed a way for the Indians to come in and make trouble and eventually in effect replace the Chogyal.

Q: The Indians have taken over entirely now? Or is there still a degree of autonomy.

KIRK: There's very little real autonomy now, if any. Not nearly as much as even the limited autonomy that there was. Its under very tight control at this point.

Q: You worked for a very well known and somewhat controversial figure in the Foreign Service. Would you like to say something about Ambassador Bowles, his strengths and weaknesses. He's certainly a wonderful man, and a very interesting one. There have been debates as to whether he had real good judgment—political judgment.

KIRK: To my mind—well, one thing about Ambassador Bowles is that he managed to attract around him a remarkable group of people. Of his special assistants, one became head of AID, one became head of the Peace Corps and governor of Ohio, one became head of AIPAC, the Israeli PAC organization. Of the external section that I mentioned of about five or six of us, I think four or five have become ambassadors at least once if not twice. So he was able to identify, and bring to his staff, a very remarkable, a very highly talented group of people—that was one thing. He took the advertising man's approach to diplomatic reporting. In other words, he had a product to sell, namely Indian-American relations, and he advertised his product—he advertised it to the hilt, because he believed that was the way you accomplished something in Washington. People used to say 60 to 80 percent of his reporting was discounted, but the remaining 20 percent was enough to at least cause our friends in Pakistan immeasurable grief. And I think that one could argue whether in the end he accomplished more by that than he would have by straight objective reporting, a larger percentage of which would have been credited. I've always favored the objective reporting myself but the other is not ineffective.

Q: This is a fairly common thing to happen to a first time diplomat who becomes an ambassador right away, not always, but I had a gentleman named Korry up in Addis when I was in Mogadishu...

KIRK: What is it they say? “Where you stand is where you sit.” I think personally Bowles was much better as an ambassador than he was as an Under Secretary. He's not a great man for detailed bureaucratic paper, one who moves the paper quickly.

Q: It's hard to see all the interests and give them a proper weight.

KIRK: Certainly that's true. But he was certainly an interesting person to work for, and the Indians, of course, loved him, partly because he was such an enthusiastic supporter in Washington. But it was not easy at that time because India was not very popular because of its nuclear position.

Q: You were there what about five years, or two and a half, something like that?

KIRK: Just a little over two years. I was minding my own business in the political section, and one fine morning a telegram came in saying I had been assigned to Saigon. This without any advance word whatsoever. And I would very much have preferred not to do that since I had four small children, and was still fond of my wife. I thought they could find enough people for whom neither was true to send to Saigon. But I had really no alternative but to accept on the grounds that if you're in the Foreign Service, unless you have a really good reason, you have to go where they send you. This was in early November-late October, and I managed to get them to agree I would leave after Christmas, so I moved to Saigon the 27th of December of 1967.

Q: Then, as usual, I suppose they said, "What? You here already."

KIRK: Well, no, actually they did seem to need me at that point. There was a small unit within the political section that was responsible for North Vietnam watching, and I was heading that unit. The reason, I guess, I was sent there really was because of my experience in the communist world. One of my first impressions in Saigon was at a New Year's eve party that I went to—this is New Year's eve of 1968—where I would say almost all of the top people of the embassy, and even from the provinces, were present. It was a very good party but I'd just been three days ago in New Delhi, as I mentioned, and I was really stuck by the fact that these people were going to remake Vietnam. They were going to get rid of all the corruption, they were going to win the war, we were going to make a democracy out of it with a House of Representatives, a Senate, a Supreme Court. The whole thing was going to be very neat and tidy.

Q: All was going to be democratic, I suppose.

KIRK: Exactly, and it was all very high and noble ideals, but as I mentioned, India is sort of the grave yard of men's hopes and you learn a good deal of humility in India, even as an American, about your ability to change things. I must say at that point, I had considerable doubt that we could accomplish all that, praiseworthy as it was. Of course at the time Tet a month or two later, it became apparent that we could not.

Q: Ambassador Kirk, we were just talking about Vietnam, and you were talking about the Tet.

KIRK: In those days spouses and families—then usually referred to as wives and families—were not allowed to be with you in Saigon, but for American holidays the spouse, not the children, were allowed to come in. The Vietnamese proposed that this should be done for Vietnamese holidays. Well, therefore, some spouses were allowed to come in for Tet, including my wife who came over from Delhi leaving our four children with their grandparents. In any case, there was a good deal of rumbling during the night, but the Vietnamese celebrate such holidays by massive explosions of firecrackers, and I told my wife that was all it was. Well, we woke up the next morning to no phone calls, no phone working, and the radio saying that Saigon was under attack. I said I obviously had to go up to the embassy so I set off in my grey pinstriped suit walking up through the center of the city, up towards the embassy. No one was on the streets, of course, and a few blocks from the embassy I saw an American tank with a bunch of soldiers around, and a major came over to me and said, “What are you doing?” I said, “I'm going to my office at the embassy.” And he said, “There are Viet Cong all over that place, go back.” So I did, and returned to the embassy later that day when it became apparent that the Viet Cong had in fact been cleared out.

In Saigon, certainly, we had the impression, and in the country we had the impression that Tet was a military defeat for the Vietnamese in the sense they committed their undercover

South Vietnamese National Liberation Front forces, and did not achieve a major victory, or anything like the victory they'd hoped to achieve. On the other hand it was quite clear that Tet was a tremendous victory for them in the United States, where the decisive theater of the war was as it turned out.

After Tet and the move towards the Paris peace talks, my unit of the political section was charged with backing up the Saigon side of the peace talks. What that consisted of essentially was doing the staff work for a series of meetings between Ambassador Bunker, his deputy Ambassador Berger, the political counselor, first Arch Calhoun and then Martin Herz, and President Thieu, Vice President Ky, the Foreign Minister, and a note taker on the Vietnamese side. So the four of us—I was the note taker on the American side—would go to these meetings once or twice a week with those four individuals to whom we were presenting the kinds of concessions that we thought the Vietnamese should at least consider to get the peace talks moving. This, of course, is a very early stage in the peace talks. The concessions were nothing like as great as the ones that eventually had to be made. But Thieu, whatever else you could say about him, was a master of diplomatic negotiation and technique, and he gave virtually nothing away. He listened with great politeness to everything Ambassador Bunker had to say, but committed himself to virtually no concessions whatsoever.

One of the interesting things to me, during this several months really of meetings, was to see how Thieu downgraded Ky's status during the process of the negotiation. At the first meetings Ky would be in Thieu's office when we came into the waiting room. When we would be ushered in to join, they were obviously talking together. A little bit later, we could see through some translucent curtains the figure of Ky going into Thieu's office just a moment before we did. Still later Ky was in the waiting room with us. Of course, in the oriental world this was a dramatic symbol of his decreasing status in terms of the power situation in Saigon. And, of course, Thieu and Ky were very different people. Ky was a

very flamboyant fighter pilot type; Thieu was much more quiet, oriental appearing, much less accessible to Americans, and much more clever at bureaucratic maneuvering.

In any case, these talks went on for some time, and we then began to get into the layers upon layers of classification, or sensitivity we had. The messages on these talks had one special classification. Then it developed there was a second series of messages that were coming in with another level of classification on the same subject. And this, as Vietnam went on, was just added to more and more. So you had circles within circles within circles that were only dimly apparent to us working in one of the circles at the time.

I guess what really struck me about the embassy operation there was that we had almost no contact with the Vietnamese. My feeling was that we knew little about what was going on, really, in Vietnam. We had this contact with Thieu and Ky, that was special, but with the people we had very little really and it was difficult to move around the countryside in many cases. It seemed to me we knew less about the Vietnamese than we had about the Indians, and knew less about the Indians than we had about the Soviets. We knew less about the Soviets than we had about Italians. As you move east somehow it becomes more and more difficult. Well, the cultural gap is greater and perhaps not unnatural.

Another thing of interest to me in that Vietnamese experience was that almost everyone had a program of action that they were following: be it pacification, military victory, economics. The tendency was very much to report successes for the program for which you were responsible. I think that was one of the reasons that the reporting got badly skewed, and it did get badly skewed, I believe, even though most people are certainly honest. There was one small unit in the political section called the provincial reporting unit which had two officers for each of the four corps areas of South Vietnam. These young men would go out, observe, and then write reports. And they had no responsibility for any program. Their reports were much more pessimistic than those of the military and the civilian—civilians who were program administrators.

Q: Do you remember who ran that section when you were there?

KIRK: I just honestly don't. There are people who are now quite prominent in the Service who were some of these reporting officers. Dave Lambertson was one. These were all very junior officers and partly for that reason some of their reports were discounted. Partly they showed the indignation and surprise at corruption that you might expect from a junior American officer. That tended to leave people to give less weight to their reports than they might otherwise have done. It was sort of as if they were discovering the real world, that they were a little bit too idealistic. But I must say, I thought as a whole they gave a better picture of what was going on than almost anyone else. They were inconvenient, these reports, because they did vary with what was going out. That part of the political section was abolished shortly after I left, not because I left, but shortly after I left which I always thought was too bad.

I guess that's really all I need say about Saigon except that there were an awful lot of good people there.

Q: Well, they certainly had their pick of people almost, such as you.

KIRK: There was no question, you got the word and off you went.

Q: Was Bunker there most of the time? Or was he away a good deal?

KIRK: Bunker was there most of the time. He occasionally went to Nepal to visit Carol Laise, his wife. He was there almost all the time, and he, as you know, was an immensely conscientious person, always available, long hours, a wonderful person to work for, of course.

Q: I remember the Italian Foreign Office thought he was the best guy that had ever been in Italy up until the time I left anyway.

KIRK: I first met him really when I was in New Delhi in connection with the advance trip for Eisenhower's visit that I mentioned earlier on the preceding tape. I was really struck that Bunker welcomed us into his office, the eight, or ten, or twelve top people, if you will, on the advance party, along with his embassy people. He took off his coat and said, “Let's go to work,” and proceeded to give the kind of personal direct attention to the Presidential visit that it required, which not all ambassadors did. And Bunker already by that time was a very distinguished ambassador. In Saigon he was always kind and thoughtful and wise.

I think it was hard for the American establishment at the embassy, and indeed later in Washington—or at the same time in Washington—to accept how tough the North Vietnamese were, and how determined they were. Again, our reporting of that subject was not terribly much welcomed in Washington.

After Vietnam I came back to Washington to work in Bill Sullivan's office—right outside his door—as a kind of special assistant, albeit not with that title. Bill was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in what was then known as FE, Far East, now EAP, for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. And I spent a couple of years, as I say, with him. Bill at that point reported in the capacity of Deputy Assistant Secretary to Secretary Rogers, and he reported as deputy head of an NSC committee on Vietnam to Henry Kissinger. And as a mark of his diplomatic skill he managed to do both without offending either. We would have meetings twice a week of people from the Pentagon, from AID, from CIA, from the White House, and from State, to coordinate the sort of senior working level activities on Vietnam. Not that we were making the policies certainly, much less myself who was sitting there as kind of factotum and note taker, and facilitator. Not that policy was being made there, but to be sure that the implementation of the policy was coordinated and was moving ahead smoothly. I knew that work quite well.

It was interesting to me to see the interplay of...

Q: This was called the Vietnam Working Group, was it?

KIRK: The Vietnam Working Group was actually the Vietnam desk. This was called something else, Vietnam Task Force, or something like that. The director of the Vietnam Working Group was a member of this ad hoc body that coordinated things. He represented the State Department, if you will. He, unlike Bill Sullivan, did not have a NSC hat, which Bill did. For example, if a paper were wanted on various withdrawal scenarios, we would produce that as part of this group. If we had to coordinate messages of various kinds going out to Paris, or going out to Saigon, of an inter-departmental nature that didn't have to be done at the Secretary level, then we would do that. Of course the interesting thing in those meetings was the interplay between what was happening in Vietnam, what was happening in Paris, and what was happening in the United States. Different people reporting on different aspects of this and trying to keep all this in mind—at this point it was essentially managing the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam. Nixon was already President, and it was clear that withdrawal was the name of the game. It was a question of how fast, under what circumstances, and what kinds of negotiating techniques. The negotiations, of course, the real ones, were being handled by Kissinger in the White House but John Holbrooke (?), his assistant for those things, used to come over. Although he did not share with us what was going on, he knew what was going on.

As I mentioned, if we were asked to do papers for the NSC, then we would coordinate the production of those. And here again in this circles within circles I remember coordinating two papers simultaneously. One paper was close to the real paper. I was involved in that. That was a small group. Then there was a larger group that was doing another paper that was not witting of much of the material that went into the first paper. And I'm sure that there was a third paper of a yet higher level that was where it really mattered. I think to some extent that was Dr. Kissinger simply keeping everybody writing papers and not getting in his way. Though to his credit I think that he absorbed more of the detailed studies than most NSC members, or Secretaries of State.

Q: He was a fantastic character, there's no question about that.

KIRK: He is a fantastic character.

Q: It is not right to speak of him in the past tense, because he's very much around.

KIRK: I must say again, as a member and sometimes chairman of those inter-departmental meetings, it was extraordinary the difference in the power of the State Department representative after Henry Kissinger moved over to the State Department then before he was there. All of a sudden the people around the table were much more deferential because at that point Kissinger also retained the title of National Security Adviser. So as a State Department representative you could say, “I will appeal it to the National Security Adviser,” who also happened to be your boss. This is particularly important in dealing with the Pentagon because they were often quite difficult on some of these things. I remember being taken over there for a very long briefing about how it was absolutely physically impossible to move our men out in more than a year and a half, or something like that, even if the President ordered it immediately, something that I expressly did not believe.

Q: They hadn't heard about operation Desert Storm yet.

KIRK: That's right. Moving troops and equipment out in an orderly way is difficult. Moving them out as fast as possible is much less efficient. But there another thing that was of interest to me was that an analyst—who for these purposes had best remain nameless, I suppose—in INR, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, who was writing what I thought was some pretty good stuff on the North Vietnamese, particularly how tough they were and how they weren't about to give up. He was not able to get his material out through his front office, or even through his directorate in INR because it was going contrary to regular wisdom. He used to give me copies of his drafts, and I would give them to the NSC staff. That was the only way that we got this material to at least the NSC staff. I doubt very much if they showed them to President Johnson but at least they knew what a responsible analyst thought. And he was then fired from INR. We managed to get him a job as it so

happened on the NSC staff. But the willingness of people to accept information contrary to their preconceptions is very limited.

Q: Well, you must have found out about this later on when you had that INR desk.

KIRK: Yes, yes indeed.

Q: Now you finally got a little...

KIRK: A delightful year at the Senior Seminar.

Q: By this time you'd been quite a bit on...

KIRK: I'd been on Vietnam from December of '67 until July- August of '71, which was plenty.

Q: So then you got that year's vacation that we all got at some point.

KIRK: Mind stretching, and it was a delightful year, a very useful year.

Q: I think it is one of the most delightful things that the Department has ever done, direct us to leave. It wasn't done by the Department at all but...

KIRK: But I think also the idea of teaching people who were presumably going to go ahead in the Service, giving them the opportunity to really learn about the United States, is very important. We were able, as I'm sure you were in that operation, to go places and do things and talk to people that no ordinary citizen or even extraordinary citizen of the United States could do.

Q: The Senior Seminar was just coming along; I went to the War College and that was different.

KIRK: Which is also good but a little different. Because our focus was very much domestic, at least half of it was domestic.

Q: Well, I think that's perhaps one of the things that Lewis Jones said that was pretty good. I think he had a good focus on the darn thing and after that it started to fall apart.

KIRK: And after the Senior Seminar, if you want to move on?

Q: And next it says here, ACDA.

KIRK: Yes, I was asked to be deputy assistant director in the Bureau of International Relations of ACDA. That bureau was essentially responsible for backing up, and to some extent staffing, our delegation at what was then known as the CCD, the Committee of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, now known I believe, as the CD, Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The conference of a group of 24, I think it was at that point, nations, which focused on controlling chemical weapons, biological weapons, nuclear tests, all that kind of multilateral arms control. Not the bilateral stuff, but the multilateral stuff. They had meetings twice a year, each one lasting two and a half to three months. During the really just one year that I was there, the main focus was chemical weapons. A biological weapons treaty had just been signed. The main focus was chemical weapons, plus a little discussion about comprehensive nuclear test ban, a little discussion of conventional disarmament but not much. There was essentially no progress made during that time. I suppose the only thing to be said about that was the degree to which in those days we and the Soviets, known as the co-chairmen of the committee, essentially ran the committee. It was clear that nothing could be done unless we agreed that it be done, and it was also pretty clear that if we agreed something was going to be done, it was going to be done, albeit that took a little time sometimes. In fact it seemed to me that the principal benefit of that organization at that time was to be able, if you will, to multilateralize a bilateral U.S. and Soviet agreement on nuclear nonproliferation, on biological weapons,

potentially on chemical weapons. But nothing was ripe at that point and we spent the time essentially arguing with each other.

Q: How much of a job was it for you to learn the language and mystique of this business which always seemed to me it is another world.

KIRK: Well, it is.

Q: I know nothing but reading books on it and that sort of thing.

KIRK: Remember we were not—well, we weren't really in the strategic arms negotiations. We were in the bilateral arms negotiations. We weren't counting missiles and warheads and things like that. In fact, START negotiations did begin while I was there, and we did have two people on the staff that were just starting to get involved in the START negotiations. That is a practically life-time study. But chemical weapons, at least in those days, was...there were obviously technical parts, and we had some technical people, but the essential issues were comprehensible. You had to learn a little bit about things such as precursors, the things that you use to make a chemical weapon, and the things you use to make the things you use to make chemical weapons. One of the issues is, where do you have the cut-off, where do you start regulating? It becomes quite difficult, and technicians argue about that. But they could pretty well demonstrate the ways that you would go about regulating chemical weapons if you wanted to. But at that point it wasn't clear that the Soviets wanted to. So that was essentially a holding operation, my first real experience in multilateral conference work, albeit, as I say, it was largely trading statements, but I got some sense of what it is to try and bring around other people to your point of view—other nations.

Q: Well then you went to the poor old country of East Africa.

KIRK: That's right. I remember I came back from a session of the conference and was told that Archer Blood, the director of Personnel or something like that at the time, wanted to

see me. I went up to see him and he told me that very seldom in his particular job did he have to give people good news, but he wanted to tell me that I'd been selected to be the Department's nominee for ambassador to Somalia, to my total surprise. I wasn't of a high enough rank really, and certainly not old enough, at least in those days. I was the token youth, I think. Then I had never been in Africa, and only had a reasonable approximation of where Somalia was, if the truth be known. But that was very exciting, and I remember coming home and telling my wife we were going to Africa, and seeing her face fall. But I said, “But as ambassador,” and she looked at me in total disbelief.

The reason for that was, I think, some knowledge of Italian many years back, some ability to demonstrate an ability to operate in difficult countries because Somalia in those days was a close friend of the Soviets, and the rules for the Americans in Somalia were very much like the rules for Americans in Moscow or any one of the Iron Curtain countries.

Q: Was this among the really bad times, or did it become a little bit better?

KIRK: No, but by this time...I was told about this in April let's say, and actually went out to Somalia in October I guess, I can't remember exactly, '73. And at that time the Soviets were definitely Somalia's best friend. We were not allowed to travel more than 40 kilometers outside the city, Somalians were not allowed to come to our embassy, and relations with the Somali government were quite distant. We had no Peace Corps, no AID program.

Q: What did you do while you were there?

KIRK: Not a great deal to do except to try and keep up the morale of the very small staff, and to report the best we could on what was going on. I remember Tom McElhiney, who was then quite senior in the management side, and who had been ambassador in Africa, telling me when I went up to see him, “Now, Roger, remember that you are in a small place. If you decide you want to send a telegram to Washington, take a swim. If, when you come back from the swim, you still want to send a telegram, then send it.” I always thought

that it was good advice. “Don't bother Washington too much,” albeit, it was true that the Soviets had use of the facilities in Berbera, and there was a certain amount of interest in what was going on in Somalia.

Q: At that time we closed up Hargeysa, which I opened up by the way.

KIRK: Did you?

Q: How many people did you have?

KIRK: We were down to a very small operation, and the situation got, if anything, a bit worse during my time there. My predecessor, Matt Looram, had left quite quickly.

Q: It was all rather nasty.

KIRK: His wife, a Rothschild, had been not only threatened, but an assassination team had come in that we felt was targeted against her, so she was evacuated immediately, and he was shortly thereafter. So when I got there—my wife is not a Rothschild, I was about to say, “I regret to say,” but let's see how that actually works out, I don't mean it that way. One of the Somali guards used to sleep in front of the gate when we went in, and when we went out, and the whole rest of the day and night. He was left over from the security threat there had been.

It was essentially, if you will, a holding operation. In fact, I was in the stadium when a Soviet visitor, I think it was the Prime Minister, I can't remember now, came. It was announced that the Somalis and the Soviets had signed a friendship treaty, which we reported back to Washington. One of the few times we had a scoop because the statement was in Russian, and nobody could understand except me so I reported it out of Mogadishu before the press got it.

Towards the end of my time in Somalia, that is to say in December of 1974, the drought began to get real serious. The Somalis asked the Soviets and a variety of other people

for help. I knew they were going to ask for assistance. I was sure they were going to ask us but they had not, so I told Washington I thought they would. And sure enough they did then call me down, and asked me for assistance, and using the ambassadorial authority that we have for emergencies, I was able to commit $25,000, as it then was, right away. The disaster relief people in the Department had a ship en route—one of many, I guess—to India with some civil defense biscuits, biscuits that had been stored in civil defense shelters in the United States.

Q: For 20 years.

KIRK: That's right, and they turned this ship around and it arrived at Mogadishu harbor about 7 or 8 days after the Somalis had requested this assistance. This was by far the most rapid assistance that anyone had produced. There was one problem. I went out to the ship, was hoisted aboard in a breeches buoy because there was no dock, as you know.

Q: Yes, I've made that trip.

KIRK: ...and was given one of these things to taste. It tasted perfectly awful. I said, “My God, what are we doing?” Well, it turned out, either by accident or deliberately, this particular biscuit had been lying in the scuppers for about a week. But I got another one and it tasted fine, like a graham cracker would. The speed with which we got things there was truly impressive, to me as well as to the Somalis. I think this had a contribution to make— who knows how much—to their eventual turning back to the United States because we were the one country that delivered, and delivered fast.

Q: Well, we had done that in a similarly small scale when I was there, and I was even congratulated by the Soviet ambassador. He was preparing other devices. Were you able to get around East Africa at all, or were you pretty well confined?

KIRK: Betty and I visited in Addis. The troubles were just starting and we were told that we should not leave the embassy compound. We were there for 3 or 4 days but it hadn't gotten really bad. And we visited in Nairobi, and to our great pleasure we were able to persuade our Charg# in both places to visit us in Mogadishu. It seemed much harder to go from Nairobi or Addis to Mogadishu than the reverse, but we did persuade them to come and we had some good exchanges on policy.

Q: We did somewhat the same. We planned to travel quite a bit but you must have needed to much more than we did, and probably were able to get away less in some respects.

KIRK: We did go on one safari—oh, I guess you wouldn't call it that in Somalia—with the CONOCO people.

Q: CONOCO was still there?

KIRK: CONOCO was there. We knew the police would give us heavy coverage so we asked them to send a police guard with us, which they did. Each place we went we accumulated another one until finally we were a party of 20 or 30, about 20 of whom were Somali police of various forms and another.

A couple of things there that struck me about the Somali experience. One, we had—and he may have been there when you were there—a former Olympic athlete who was helping African nations generally with their athletic programs, and a man who was a basketball coach. I thought it was kind of a funny thing for the American government to be funding. But this basketball coach was teaching the sons of the elite of the ruling Council. He was a very outgoing kind of person and he did more for the United States reputation in Somalia than anybody else, as far as I'm concerned. He had much more contact, albeit of a limited nature, with the people who were running the country than I did. I thought it was a very good idea. He was a very intelligent, personable, black man, and he was really just excellent. I thought that was a very useful program.

The other thing is, at receptions occasionally—not at our house because Somalis could not come—but in other places a Somali would come over to me very quietly and say, “I spent three or four weeks in your country on a visitors program and it was one of the most exciting and wonderful weeks of my life. I just wanted you to know that,” and then would sidle away. I think that kind of program is very useful in laying seeds that will bear fruit perhaps years or even decades later.

Q: The problem is to get them to go back.

KIRK: Well, that's right.

Q: After this you went back into the INR business again.

KIRK: Yes, again I was minding my own business...

Q: Did you have trouble getting out?

KIRK: I had no trouble getting out in the sense that I got a telegram from I guess the Under Secretary for Administration, saying, “The following is the text of a memorandum which I have sent to the Secretary of State and which he has approved.” One of the sentences in that memorandum was that Roger Kirk was coming back to be the deputy in INR. So that gave me very little choice, I felt.

Q: That's amazing that they wouldn't even explain it that much.

KIRK: They wanted someone to handle particularly the administration of INR. It was then being headed by one of the Secretary's close confidants, in fact colleagues if you will, Bill Hyland, who had tremendous influence on policy making with the Secretary, but who was not able to devote a great deal of time to organization and running of the bureau. They wanted somebody to come back and do that.

Q: This was in...

KIRK: This was in February of '75. I'd been there about a year and three months.

Q: Still Kissinger, was it?

KIRK: Yes.

Q: Well, I think that's plenty of time to be there with that kind of atmosphere. I was there a little longer but I was top dog. So you were really involved more in administration, than substantive.

KIRK: Well, not really because Bill Hyland was really focused on what the Secretary wanted him to do. Therefore essentially the running of the bureau, with whatever direction he wished to give, was essentially up to me both in terms of substance and in terms of administration.

Bill Hyland was succeeded after about a year and a half by Harold Saunders, another one of Kissinger's close associates. One of the things that we did during that time, was to devise a formula for the Secretary's morning book. That is the compendium of State Department telegrams and intelligence reports and analyses that he receives each morning. The last two pages of that book in those days...we devised a system of devoting them to two or three analytical pieces on the affairs that we thought were of primary importance that he needed to know about on a given day, with a brief paragraph of summary at the beginning and then up to a page, or two- thirds of a page of analysis after that. We think he read it usually. When Vance replaced Kissinger, he read it regularly on his way from his house to the office. And I'm glad to see that that same format was being used at least as of six months ago by INR. So it lasted a good ten years.

Q: Your man had to get it ready in time for the driver to take it out to the house. You'd have to send an officer out with it I suppose.

KIRK: Well, that's right. On the analytical pieces, because we were just getting started, I was the editor and sort of selector and chooser—I spent about half my time actually as it later turned out on that book in the early months. The analytical pieces we did the afternoon before, and then just had them checked to be sure that nothing had happened in the interim. But the other great advantage was that either the director, that is to say Hyland or Saunders, or myself, were always in the Secretary's staff meeting, whether it was a big one or a small one, or even his meeting with four or five people. So we knew exactly what he was worrying about, and we knew just exactly how much he knew about a given area or a given problem. Problems have a habit of cropping up in obscure places. I remember, for example, there was one on the border between Zaire and Chad. I wasn't sure initially that the Secretary's top officers knew where Chad was. You started with a map of Africa, and then the next day you had a map of Zaire and Chad, and the next day you had a map of the little area we were talking about. So within 48 hours we would quickly become familiar with the details of the geography. You had to know exactly where to hit them at any given particular points, you didn't seem to be talking down to them, or using a lot of terms and things that they simply didn't understand and didn't know. And that way you're able, if your intelligence people are that sitting close, even if not saying anything, to where the Secretary is making his policy, or working up his day, to know exactly what can be most useful to him. That way you can really know what he needs. He can never tell you what he needs, he doesn't have time to, and he doesn't really know. I found that perhaps the most exciting part of the job. To see what you put in the book one morning drive the staff meeting a half an hour later was also quite rewarding. So I think that's really the key to having intelligence be effective. To know exactly what the people who are going to use it are worrying about, and how much they know about the subject.

Q: This is an interesting follow on to your being in the Secretariat in your first job. You started out by...

KIRK: ...reading all that stuff.

Q: You were reading into them...

KIRK: I highlighted material with a yellow pencil to give to the Secretary. INR, of course, was also responsible for the external research budget of the Department of State in those days. We had at that time about $14-$15 million a year to spend. One thing I must say that struck me, was the extraordinary difficulty of getting information and insights from the academic world into the minds of policy makers For a variety of reasons. The academic world was on such a different time schedule than the policy maker, or even the near policy maker. You'd ask someone in the academic world for something and they'd say they'd have an outline in six months, and what you really needed was the finished product in six days. And also, it would be a 300 page book, and what you really needed was a two or three page, or one page memorandum. So we struggled with how to get information to the policy maker. We found that conferences and meetings were often a very useful way of doing it. One of the best ways of doing it was to plan to have a session with, let's say the office director or maybe even the Assistant Secretary level, as to how the study would be set up, and sort of where it would head. Often that's all that the people in the Department ever knew about the study but from that alone they got a sense as to what the academics were thinking, and what their ideas were. But bringing the two together is very, very hard.

Q: Is that program continuing?

KIRK: INR still has a substantial budget but ACDA has a good size budget of its own for research, and some of the bureaus I think have small amounts they themselves can contract out. INR's budget is much reduced for that reason, I believe, and perhaps for the reasons I've suggested.

The other thing, of course, that we were to do was to exert political control over the CIA. That is another function of INR. This was the period of the Senatorial and House investigations of the intelligence community. The Church committee investigated the intelligence community at a certain length but only focused on assassinations, allegations

that the CIA had tried to assassinate. A large part of our job in the front office was to maintain liaison on those investigations with the White House. We used to meet in the situation room every week to discuss how the investigations were going, what material to release to the Senate and House, what material not to release, what material to exert executive privilege on, and what material not. Something that was closely monitored by the White House staff.

Q: This must have been a very poisonous atmosphere.

KIRK: Terrible.

Q: We had a lot of our people who were retired, who were down there didn't we, on the committee staffs.

KIRK: Yes, and in my own view the committee investigation—the Church investigation—was not a serious effort in that they quickly fastened on this assassination business, and went after that which was only a very small part of the whole picture. It quickly, rather than becoming a cooperative effort to determine where in fact abuses had occurred and what controls needed to be put on, became a battle trying to extract documents from the administration and embarrass an administration that didn't give up the documents.

Q: By this time I was long gone, but I still have followed this with considerable interest.

KIRK: We were told at one time that they had a room in the House, I believe, set aside to keep the Secretary in as they were going to lock him up for not providing enough documents. I always felt my job was to keep him out of that room.

Q: It never quite came to that point.

KIRK: It never quite came to that point.

Q: Now we're about to break the long list of foreign hell holes that you've been to, and go to Vienna.

KIRK: Actually that was kind of amusing because—you'd be interested in this. They asked me would I go to Ethiopia, and I said if that's what they wanted me to do, I would. And they then sent a message out to Addis, and the Charg# came back with probably a very sensible recommendation. He said that the fact that I had been ambassador in Somalia, even though I was a fine fellow and all that, would really make it exceedingly difficult for me to be effective in Addis. So I was called up and told that that was not going to happen, but that they'd like to send me to Vienna. And Warren Christopher, who was on the telephone, said, “The music is better in Vienna anyway.”

So I then went home with the news that we weren't going to Africa, we were going to Austria. This was in the job of what they called resident representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency which was headquartered in Vienna, a UN system organization there.

Q: Yes, well I was somewhat familiar with that job because we used to have meetings in Vienna and we'd always talk with whoever was there in that job.

KIRK: That was an interesting job because...

Q: Who was your principal? The guy who was sort of the official ambassador there? Or by that time were you it?

KIRK: No. The U.S. representative on the Governing Board was Gerry Smith, Gerard Smith, who was based in Washington. There were meetings of the Board four times a year. Gerry came out for most of those. Then he got ill and for about a year he didn't come, so I just stood in for him.

Q: I think it has been that way for a long time but there was a period when you were deputy chief of mission.

KIRK: Well, that's right. It was a little tricky in that sense, except, of course, Gerry Smith was such a gentleman that he ended up having enough confidence in me so that he came just for two or three days at a time. Actually there was a mission to the International Atomic Energy and there was also a U.S. mission to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, another UN organization in Vienna. When the person heading that mission, who was a Counselor of Embassy in the U.S. embassy to Austria, left, I suggested that the two be combined into a single mission to the UN organizations, which was done. I was actually head of two separate missions co-located in the same building for a while, then they combined them into a single mission. This made much more sense because all of our foreign diplomatic colleagues were handling all the UN organizations and you would often trade-off an understanding, shall we say, in one organization on your part for an understanding in another organization on their part. It was very important to be able to do that, to be able to speak for the U.S. Government in all of these organizations. One thing certainly that struck me was that when you have permanent representatives doing a lot of the work, they develop a camaraderie, a mutual respect, and a mutual confidence that facilitate regional agreements. It makes it a lot easier.

Of course, multilateral policy is something entirely different, in my view, than bilateral diplomacy. It's much more like a legislator, at least multilateral diplomacy in the sense of diplomacy in one of these big international organizations. You have resolutions you want to pass, you've got to get the votes for them, you have to trade concessions on something that someone else wants, for something that you want. A lot of it is negotiation, almost all on the spot. The Department simply can do nothing more than give you general guidelines. I'm assuming we're not in a crucial world shattering negotiation in which case it's much slower and every single step must be monitored. But in these kinds of things your real decision, and your real negotiation, is done in the last three or four hours in

any conference no matter how long that conference is—be it one week, two weeks or six weeks. There's no way you can get instructions as that process goes on.

One of the interesting things about Vienna was that in the Atomic Energy Agency, for example, we and the Soviets were usually on the same side of any given question. We both had nuclear weapons, and we did not want other people to have them. We both wanted to keep the budget of the organization down. We both wanted the organization to be what we would call responsible, that is responsive to the things that we thought best. So we consulted regularly and amicably, even during bad periods in American-Soviet relations, and essentially were pushing the same points of view. Their negotiating techniques and ours, of course, were quite different. I would drive my Soviet colleague bananas by trying to find out what the other people wanted, and offering limited concessions fairly early in the process. He said, “You're giving things away too soon.” I'd say, “Oleg, in the last two hours you'll give everything away. We don't want to do that. You'll just cave.” But between the two of us we managed.

Q: Did you have to use your Russian a good deal at that time too?

KIRK: Yes, a certain amount of the time I would. That kind of conversation I would have privately with him in Russian. Two Soviets were there during the five and a half years that I was there; one interestingly enough had been Molotov's private aide for ten or twelve years while Molotov was Prime Minister. He had seen, I'm sure, a great deal of the inner workings of the Soviet Union under Stalin. I asked him what time they knocked off work, and he said, “About 2:00 in the morning.” And I said, “What time did he go back to work?” and he said, “About 10:00.” He was followed by another very even more capable Soviet who had been deputy head of their treaty section, and a very skilled negotiator.

What else to say about the multilateral business? Certainly the importance of making up the U.S. position very early so that you can persuade other people, have other people take it into account, or persuade them of it, before they form their own positions, and

particularly before they form group positions. Increasingly most of the countries of the world get together in regional, or larger than regional groupings in these UN organizations, and hammer out a common position, which then becomes very difficult to change, because it means going back to five, ten, fifteen or fifty countries and trying to get them to change. For practical reasons alone, it is very important to get in there early to identify the two or three individuals who are key, persuade them of the rightness of your point of view, work out some sort of compromise with them, and then have that become their group's position. You're much more successful that way. It's often, of course, difficult to get Washington to make up its mind in time because they don't understand.

Q: It's foolish negotiating and being reviewed by the government in some cases. Well, now I'm very interested in the question of focusing on things like nuclear or non-proliferation, and all the other things that you were working on all this time. Is the IAEA, at least in the nuclear field, is that the instrument? Is that a fitting instrument that will be effective to administer controls, do you think?

KIRK: I think the IAEA has a limited function that it performs very well. That limited function is to assure that peaceful nuclear facilities and material declared to them are not used for military purposes. Now what does that mean? That means that the IAEA does not have the right to go around looking for material. It only has the right to say, “What you have told us you have is not being used for military purposes.” That you get by inspecting and checking and all the rest. And that's very valuable. Most countries in the world, under the non-proliferation treaty, have the obligation to report to the IAEA all of their nuclear facilities, and all their nuclear material. But again, the IAEA does not have the right to see, to go to some plant...

Q: That it hasn't been officially notified.

KIRK: That it hasn't been officially notified about. So within those rather precise limits the IAEA has been quite effective. All the IAEA can do is to say, in the event this is the case,

that it cannot give assurances that the material is being used only for civilian purposes. Then it's up to the member states to decide what they're going to do about that. In other words, it simply sends up a warning flag.

Q: And there's no enforcement mechanism per se in IAEA.

KIRK: The only thing the IAEA can do is make a statement like that and report it to the UN Security Council.

Q: It looks as though we're going to have many more of these jobs in the future, chemical warfare, and so on. What other mechanism is available? What would you recommend?

KIRK: For example, in the case of Iraq the Security Council passed a resolution saying that Iraq must open its entire country to international inspection for, let's say, nuclear material. Iraq, under duress, agreed to this. And the IAEA will in fact be the agency that will do this. But under duress is important because if you don't have duress an international agency depends upon the voluntary cooperation of its member states, and indeed of each member state. So that you can't compel a member state to do something it doesn't want to do. An international organization cannot do that. The member states by using various kinds of economic pressure, or military pressure, could do that. But the international organization is essentially an inert mechanism. It is pushed one way or the other by its member states.

Q: Still theoretically, the Security Council can pass a strong enough resolution.

KIRK: Sure, if Security Council passes a resolution, and if it's clear that if that resolution is not obeyed that the capital will be bombed, or that the country will be blockaded or something, whatever incentive there is, then...

Q: These are not going to be effective, or obtainable, very often presumably unless under extreme circumstances.

KIRK: Now, of course, in most cases something like inspections, let's say of nuclear weapons, or chemical weapons, is something that is desired, or at least accepted willingly by the member state because it wants to assure its neighbors that it in fact does not have a program. In other words, inspection is most effective for countries that are not violating, because they can show that they are not violating. By opening themselves, they put pressure on their neighbors, or people they're worried about, to open themselves. Essentially it's built on mutual cooperation, rather than on mutual compulsion.

Q: How would you encapsulate the prospects of effective international control of these things over the long term.

KIRK: I think it depends. I think nuclear weapons probably are pretty clearly not very useful to any given country. We thought about it, of course, recently in connection with India and Pakistan, because there was some thought that they might go to war last fall, and would they use nuclear weapons? Well, it's not clear that it would have been to either one's advantage to do so, unless, for example, the Indians were really bearing down on Rawalpindi and Karachi, and Pakistan was about to be wiped off the face of the map. Then a desperation move to use nuclear weapons might have some sense in kind of an odd way. But for Iraq, for example, to have used nuclear weapons doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Nuclear weapons seem to carry their own deterrence, not only for great powers but for small powers. To the extent that is true, there are good prospects for reasonably effective inspection of nuclear weapons. Chemical weapons, I think, is much more difficult. In short what I'm saying is that international inspection probably is only useful when the country being inspected has an interest in it. It has an interest either because it wants to prove that its not doing anything, because it wants to deter its neighbors, or because the weapons are not useful to it. To the extent that those conditions can be created, international inspection can give the proper international confidence and the proper mechanism, for carrying out inspections that otherwise would be very difficult to carry out.

For example, the Mexicans made it quite clear at one point that they would not be prepared to accept U.S. inspectors in their country. They'd be very happy, or at least prepared, to receive IAEA inspectors in their country. If they happened to be American citizens, that wouldn't bother them.

Q: So long as they're not representatives.

KIRK: Don't have the U.S. flag. And I think that would be true of many of these other situations as well, though in some cases, the countries involved will want to have bilateral inspection as well as international inspection. The Israelis, for example, you can be certain would want to have Israeli inspectors in the Arab states; and the Arabs would probably want to have Arab inspectors in Israel in addition to whatever international organization it was. That would be of benefit from the point of view of...

Q: Well, I'll believe that situation when I see it.

KIRK: I'm not sure I will even if I do see it.

Q: Is there anymore you have on Vienna while we're there? Was the UNIDO part of the job of great interest?

KIRK: UNIDO is really a much less effective organization. It was of interest because it was in the process of transforming itself into what they call a specialized agency of UN, and questions of constitution, of balance of the governing bodies, how you determine the budget, were all subject for intense discussion and consultation. It took a lot of time and there was a lot of interesting negotiation going on. But in terms of its contribution to the world as a whole, it was much less effective and less important to the United States.

We also had what I call Drugs, Women and Crime. The narcotics branches of the UN are all located in Vienna as are the Crime Prevention Branch, as is the Commission for Social

Development and Humanitarian Affairs. It took care of women's rights... As indeed was UNRA, the UN body in those days managing the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon.

Q: I'd forgotten that was in Vienna. So you really got a taste of a lot of different things.

KIRK: A lot of different things, plus we'd occasionally have the World Assembly of the Aging there, or the World Year of the Disabled. It was a very varied and interesting time.

Q: Well, eventually all good things come to an end, and you had to come back to Washington. What was the story about the transition? The reason I always ask is that you find some very interesting stories sometimes on assignments, and why you got it.

KIRK: I mentioned that I was heading two separate missions, and they were then combined into a single mission. I was asked by the Department to stay on to see that through, even though I'd already been there five and a half years, and I said I would be prepared to do that. But then I received word from a friend that the gossip column of the Washington Post had said that a certain individual in the White House staff was packing his bags for Vienna, and specifically for my job. So I made an inquiry saying I knew I'd been there a long time, it was perfectly logical that I would go, so what was the story? And the story, which was told by my successor to many people in a perfectly open way, so I feel perfectly free to repeat it, was that he, Richard Williamson, was in the White House working on federal-state relations. He decided to stop doing that, and to go out into private industry. When he announced that intention, his bosses, and indeed the President, expressed their regrets and said they felt he had done a very good job. He said he really wanted to do this. And as he was leaving the President's office, along with his boss, the President said, “Have you ever thought of going abroad?” He said, “No.” And the President said, “Why don't you think it over? Come back tomorrow.” So they showed him the list of the posts that were at that moment up before the White House. Vienna was one of them, and he came back and said, “I think maybe Vienna would be nice.” So he was assigned to Vienna. As I say, he tells the story himself.

Coming out of Vienna I was originally supposed to go as the State Department representative on the delegation to SALT it was then called, headed by Rowney, replacing Jim Goodby. For a variety of reasons I decided not to do that, and I came back to Washington. On my way back, as a matter of fact, from Vienna to Washington, I was in Rome and staying in a pensione, a little one, and got a call there from Washington, saying would I take the job as deputy in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, which I said I would.

Q: So you got fully both feet into international organizations.

KIRK: Yes, yes. In that job in Washington I was the senior deputy and also the one really responsible for the UN in New York. Jeane Kirkpatrick was in New York so we didn't really have a great deal to do about New York.

Q: Would she talk with you?

KIRK: She dealt essentially with the Secretary, or with the President usually—not with assistant secretaries, much less deputy assistant secretaries. She was perfectly pleasant enough about it, but she really pretty much did her own thing up there. But, of course, there were lots of things that she didn't want to give personal attention to. We would provide backup for activities in the delegation and position papers on a variety of things which would be in the General Assembly. That's a difficult bureau to manage, and to operate, because you're essentially getting into other people's business most of the time, the UN aspects of Africa, or the UN aspects of the Middle East, or the UN aspects of the Far East. You've got to have good officers who know how to assert themselves without giving offense. It was an interesting exercise. I must say the United Nations General Assembly is a very frustrating place. It has to exist. People need a place where they can sound off and where the views of all different kinds of people can be heard. It's not a place to get a great deal of negotiating done. We used to say that if you wanted to have a serious negotiation, you took it out of the UNGA, and if someone was taking you

into the UNGA, you knew they were not serious about it. Now, the UNGA could often sanctify, or put its stamp of approval on a negotiation such as the Namibia settlement. The Security Council could move you forward by sanctifying, or approving something that has already been worked out. The Assembly could give a very important and in many cases indispensable, international cover to a settlement. But in terms of actually reaching a settlement, that is not the forum in which to do it, albeit, the halls of the UN might be where its done.

Q: I take it by the time you were there that there wasn't quite as much pressure, because it was totally impossible anyway to win every damn vote that ever came down the pike.

KIRK: Well, to the contrary. I would say Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ambassador Kirkpatrick, one of her, I think, real contributions was to say, “What is done in the UN matters, what is said in the UN matters, we're going to take it seriously. So we're not going to sit by and let a lot of nonsense go by. We're going to fight it.” And I think on balance that was sound. We will not dignify it with a reply, is the kind of line they used to use. She said, “Everything should be dignified with a reply in the sense that if someone says the U.S. is to blame for this or that problem in the world, and we're not, we'll say so.” So that in many cases we fought harder for votes, and were more critical of people for not voting the right way, than we were under previous regimes. I often felt that one of the most difficult things for a small country was to be on the Security Council because they came under tremendous pressure.

Q: Well, the Security Council...

KIRK: From ourselves, from the Soviets and others. Even in the UNGA we focus on Israel. We fought very hard for votes on that. But if you're on the Security Council you're really under the gun because each vote counts, and we wanted to avoid the veto if we could. We used it quite often but avoided it if we could do so by lining up a country not to go with the majority, or to abstain, or to go with us. A lot of pressure was put on countries to do that, and it was very uncomfortable for some of them.

Q: It's a complex business and sometimes there is a conflict, I always thought, with your bilateral relations with a country.

KIRK: We could always get in an argument with the regional bureau about should we punish this or that country.

Q: I had a regional bureau bias. Well, eventually you got out of this again, and got to Romania. Was that something you handpicked yourself?

KIRK: No, there's a little story behind that, I suppose. The Bureau of Personnel, and the Under Secretary for Administration, were the people whom you had to look to to take care of the people who were not in regional bureaus for Chief of Mission posts, or DCM posts. In other words, if you weren't on the team of one bureau or the other the only one that's going to recommend you for an ambassador was the system, if you will. I got a call saying that I was the Department's nominee for Portugal, which was quite exciting, but they cryptically added, not to get worried about it. It was going to go to a White House person, they knew who it was. So I was what was termed the burnt offering on Portugal. But then the other thing that apparently happened is once a Foreign Service officer was turned down by the White House, for a White House appointee, the next post that he or she was put up for would—within reason, if it wasn't too obviously a political one—would be given to him or her rather than have it go to another political appointee. So after the burnt offering came a phone call. You're not given a whole lot of time to decide on these things, as you know Tully. On the phone they said, “You have been turned down for Portugal, but we're nominating you for Romania.” “Okay,” said I.

(machine turned off)

Q: When we broke off slightly there you had just precipitously accepted Romania. Were you as enthusiastic after you got there, as you were, and hearing that you had a job abroad at all?

KIRK: Well, of course, I knew that Romania was one of the most repressive of the East European regimes, and that our relations with Romania were quite difficult. But Romania was also of some interest because of its attempt to be relatively independent of the Soviets. I had frankly had enough of IO by that time, so that I was glad to be moving out.

Q: That's a wear-out job, it really is. I had one too.

KIRK: Yes, its frustrating.

Q: Its like Congressional relations job I had. A lot of fun but it kills you.

KIRK: Yes, that's right. I was really quite glad to move on from that. Basically what we were trying to do with Romania was to encourage their somewhat independent stance with the Soviets. That is to say, Ceausescu took as independent a position as he really could given his geographic location, and his relatively weak power compared to that of the Soviets. He did not allow Warsaw Pact ground forces maneuver on his soil. He had no Russian troops on his soil. He differed from the Soviets on a number of UN issues. He maintained diplomatic relations with Israel throughout the time that the Soviets broke them off. He was relatively nice to the small Jewish community in Romania, some 25,000 as compared to the way he treated the rest of the population, and as compared to the way Jews were treated in most of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union at that time. On the other hand, his internal policies were very distasteful to us. The big issue between the United States and Romania, and within the U.S. Government, was whether to continue to extend Most Favored Nation tariff treatment to Romania. It was renewed on an annual basis. The essential argument for it was the relative independence of foreign policy and the belief—I think sound belief—that extending MFN enabled us to help a few human rights cases and was the thing which persuaded, or compelled, Ceausescu to let about 2,000 to 2,500 Romanians emigrate to the United States each year. Those opposing extension of MFN argued that it was a sign of our approval for the regime, or at least it was portrayed by the regime as such, and we had no business giving that kind of approval to a

regime of that kind. Both sides of the argument, it seemed to me, have a sound, perfectly justifiable, basis. I, for a number of years, came out on the side of continuing to extend MFN. I remember talking to Roz Ridgway about it. She was the one who had to testify as Secretary for European Affairs. She said that from her point of view, it was worthwhile to get the 2,000 or 2,500 people out of Romania each year. If it were cut off those people would no longer be able to leave.

Q: That's a pretty powerful argument on the Hill because they've all got constituents who have a cousin there. Not so many in Romania as you would...

KIRK: Not so many in Romania. The principal argument on the Hill was one not made by the administration as such, although we did make it. It was the concern of those interested in the welfare of the Jewish community, that turning off MFN would lead to a marked deterioration of the condition of that community.

Q: Were they, the Romanians, still selling visas to the Jews which they were doing back in the late '40s and early '50s?

KIRK: The Romanians enjoyed a certain amount of economic benefits, loans and this kind of thing, from Israel. A number of tourists came from Israel, and, of course, they got MFN. I think all these were very much in their mind. I'm not myself sure that there was actually a cash payment per head, the way there was with Germans going out to Germany. Between 12,000 and 14,000 ethnic Germans went out to Germany each year from Romania, and it was a very definite commercial, in effect, payment.

Q: I think there were some back in the earlier days.

KIRK: Some people said that. I'm really in no position to say whether it was right or not. Certainly they let the Jews out of Romania because they thought it was in their, the Romanians, interest for a variety of reasons. It was not for humanitarian reasons. Ceausescu had power to do what he wanted.

Q: You must have found it quite a bearable place because you were there a good deal longer than people usually are.

KIRK: Yes. Most of those Iron Curtain posts, what were then Iron Curtain posts, had the common three year tour by that time. Three years would have had me leaving in November of '88, which of course makes no sense because that's exactly the time of a Presidential election. It would have been quite difficult to appoint an ambassador to replace me, or anyone else, in the last months of an administration, and not so easy to do it in the first month or two of an administration. I, and a number of other people in that same category were kept on for six months or so extra. U.S. ambassadors live reasonably well everywhere. Certainly, though the health facilities were not very good, they were better than they were in Somalia, and much quicker access to...

Q: And you were in real civilization too. That makes it an interesting place.

KIRK: And Romania is a beautiful country, and the people, to the extent they were allowed to see us, were quite friendly. They were not allowed to see us very much but they were quite friendly. We were able to...there were no travel restrictions in Romania, so we were able to travel around the country and visit a number of towns. United States was looked on with great favor by the Romania people. We sort of symbolized for them democracy, freedom and prosperity, and they tended, when they could...

Q: Some of each.

KIRK: Yes, exactly. They would sort of express enthusiasm for us as a country, and as individuals, wherever we went. Our contacts with Ceausescu were quite limited. They really were mainly on quite formal occasions, usually when a visitor would come to Romania. In the first couple of years, that is in '86 and part of '87, almost every month or two—let's say every two months—a fairly prominent American Jewish leader would come to talk with Ceausescu, again urging him to continue to treat the Jewish population of the

country in a decent way, and not to destroy some Jewish buildings. And I would often, not always, but often be asked by them to accompany them to meet the President so I sat in on a number of these conversations. Ceausescu had a habit, which he claimed was a traditional Romanian habit—and I have no reason not to believe that- -of allowing the guests to speak first after he would say, “I'm so glad you've come.” Then he would say, “As our guests, I'd liked to hear what you have to say.” And I always, after the first time or two, advised the visitors to say everything that they wanted to say at that moment because they might not get another chance. And, if they took my advice, they would sometimes speak for 15 or 20 minutes. Ceausescu would then respond to each of the points that they had made. He had a very good memory in that sense. He wouldn't take any note, but he would meet each point that they had made—in his own way, of course, giving his own point of view. He was quite good in that kind of situation. His ideas were at considerable variance from ours of course, but he was certainly very sharp. He was not well educated, but he was intelligent without question, and civil. These conversations often lasted for two or three hours. I would be the note taker because there were just the two of us in the room. I must say taking notes for two or three hours and then having to reproduce it was a great trial. Something ambassadors aren't supposed to have to do.

Q: What language did Ceausescu speak?

KIRK: Ceausescu would speak in Romanian, and it would then be interpreted.

Q: Oh, I see, so there was an interpreter.

KIRK: I could understand the Romanian but the practice with Ceausescu was always to speak in one's own language, except the occasional word of greeting. Sometimes Ceausescu would say something in Romanian, or I would. I never heard him use a foreign word.

Q: How much Romanian did you manage to learn by that time when you were there?

KIRK: Before I went out I told the people in the Department that I thought it would be a good idea if I had some time to learn Romanian, and could take a class or have a private tutor. They said it would be fine for me to have a private tutor at FSI and just please do my regular job at the same time. So I took a couple hours off about three days a week. Romanian is a language that is quite similar to Italian or French.

Q: I've heard some, but I've never...

KIRK: With a certain amount of Russian words so speaking all three it was relatively easy for me. I was pretty fluent by the time I got there.

Q: I worked pretty hard on Bulgarian, but I can't say that I ever got...

KIRK: That's a much tougher language.

Q: ...very far. I mean, I could ask a question, and ask my junior officer what the answer was.

KIRK: I took lessons while I was there, and then I really did most of my business in Romanian. In the Foreign Ministry I would have them speak in Romanian, and I would speak in English. I think if each person speaks in their native language you have a much better exchange than having that person speaking in your language, or trying to use an interpreter.

Q: That's very true, indeed.

KIRK: So, what was the job in Romania? It was essentially to try and maintain contact with all levels of society, while not appearing to embrace the government, something that is difficult to do if the government controls access to all elements of society. We had an American library that was quite well attended. We had a variety of USIA programs which were squeezed out as time went on, but some continued up until the very end. I myself did

a lot of traveling around, saw a lot of people, visited factories and theaters and all the kinds of organizations to try to remind people that the United States was still there. I would do statements or readings for the VOA that would then be broadcast into Romania. I was not allowed to broadcast on the local TV, but more people listened to VOA than listened to the local Romanian broadcast anyway. That was essentially what we were trying to do, plus of course keeping up the staff morale, and keeping reports going back to Washington, and following the human rights developments and abuses in Romania. Keeping contact with dissidents, keeping the staff active in doing that but not so active that they got themselves thrown out. In that way it was quite interesting.

Q: I always figured that one job for an ambassador in those small curtain countries was to take care of some of the western diplomatic corps. There were always a few Latinos around who were maybe by themselves, or one thing and another, and if you could pay a little extra attention to them that maybe would be worthwhile. I don't know. An ambassador is a pretty expensive appointment for that, just to do that but I still felt this was carrying out our mission in a sense. I don't know what experience you had with that.

KIRK: I think that's right. Bucharest had a large diplomatic corps. The Romanians were very active in their relations with the Third World, and in some cases even paid the expenses of Africa countries. So there were about 60 or 70 missions in Bucharest. Getting around to all of them was not exactly easy but there were the receptions and things that one went to. We had good relations with most of those people. We had about four people in the political section and two or three in the economic section, and they managed to get around.

Q: That's a pretty good sized staff. Of course, Romania has twice the population of Bulgaria.

KIRK: In all we had about sixty or seventy Americans.

Q: Oh, that's much bigger than what we had.

KIRK: That includes the Marine Guards. Still that was about the size. So we had a good sized operation going, and we had the school which, of course, is very important to our fellow diplomats.

Q: We had a small school, too.

KIRK: As you know in those situations, security concerns are an important element—security in the sense of technical security, not your own personal security which was no problem.

Q: Oh, yes, anywhere in the world, personal security...

KIRK: Here we found that talking with academics, having visitors coming in under the USIA program, just keeping on working was essentially an act of faith on our part that eventually something would pay off. Though I was not there during the revolution, I visited again a few months after it, and was pleased to see that a number of the people that we had maintained contact with, either myself or members of the embassy staff, had turned up in important positions, and were grateful for the attention that we had shown them, and for our continuing concern for them. It has now to some extent paid off, even though the regime is still a difficult one from our point of view. There are a number of people in it who benefitted from our attentions.

Q: I've a little bit lost track of Romania. Is it still a regimenting regime pretty much in control?

KIRK: Yes, the people who are running it now are people who were communists, who were prominent communist leaders under Ceausescu and fell out of favor with him for a variety of reasons. They now realize the need for economic reform. They grudgingly permit

the existence of an opposition even though they don't like it much and tend to strike out against it if the going gets at all difficult.

Q: When you came out of Romania you had a Diplomat-in-Residence assignment.

KIRK: I had known David Newsom for many years. He was a neighbor of mine, and I knew he was at Georgetown. I thought that a Diplomat-in-Residence would be a very interesting and useful thing to do as well as being an enjoyable one. I wanted to do it in Washington, and I wanted to do it at Georgetown, so I told David and he said that would be very acceptable to him. And I then told the people in the Department that I would like to do that, and they were only too happy to oblige. So that was all set up pretty much before I came back.

Q: That was more or less the conventional year, but you got into some real teaching, didn't you?

KIRK: That's right. I was told I could do pretty much what I wanted, and I said the one reason I wanted to be at a university was I wanted to see how I liked teaching the students. So the second half of the year I taught a course on the history of international relations since World War II, which was helpful in preparing for this tape. I had some satisfaction in telling the students that was the story of my life, and filling them full of war stories, and I hope some insights. I found that very rewarding.

Q: Were these undergraduates?

KIRK: Graduate students, in the School of Foreign Service. I think that is a very interesting thing to do. When you bring to the academic world someone who has been a practitioner, as they call it, you bring an insight and dimension to the students that otherwise they do not normally get. And by dint of teaching, you, as everyone of course says, do dig into it yourself, you refresh your memory at least, and maybe more than that. You get to know a lot more about the subject than you did before. So I found that a very worthwhile thing to

do. And as my wife and I didn't particularly want to go abroad again, we decided at the end of that year just to stay here in Washington, so I retired from the Foreign Service in August of '90.

Q: But you're still at Georgetown now, are you?

KIRK: And then Georgetown asked me to stay on as an adjunct professor.

Q: Have you got a final blessing for the Foreign Service, or a statement on your career?

KIRK: I certainly enjoyed my Foreign Service career.

End of interview